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3 All his life James Montgomery Flagg has made friends and enemies lavishly. In *ROSES AND BUCKSHOT* he tosses brush, palette and caution to the winds. In giving you his autobiography (profusely illustrated, of course) he writes candidly of the hundreds of famous people he has known and of his numerous love affairs and hate-affairs. Mr. Flagg is a vehement man!

"Give him alphabet soup," a friend has said, "and he only eats the exclamation points!"

Rigorously true to his views he lets the heads roll where they may. But should you find any undue modesty in these chapters, you may be sure that Mr. Flagg did not intend it.

Across the canvas of his fifty-odd years as an artist (he sold his first drawings at 14) moves an almost unbelievable parade of presidents, statesmen, stage celebrities, not to mention several of his models who rose to Hollywood stardom—Norma Shearer, for instance.

By turns you find him carousing with his close friend Jack Barrymore, as many faceted as a fly's eye;" on a glorious weekend of adventure with a silk hat and Booth Tarkington; silently painting a portrait of Mark Twain, "You've got Sam at his stormiest," said William Dean Howells; being insulted by Arnold Ben-

nett, "never meet your favorite author;" sitting in worship before Greta Garbo—and when she lowered her eyelashes, "it was like a Venetian blind being let down."

S H O T

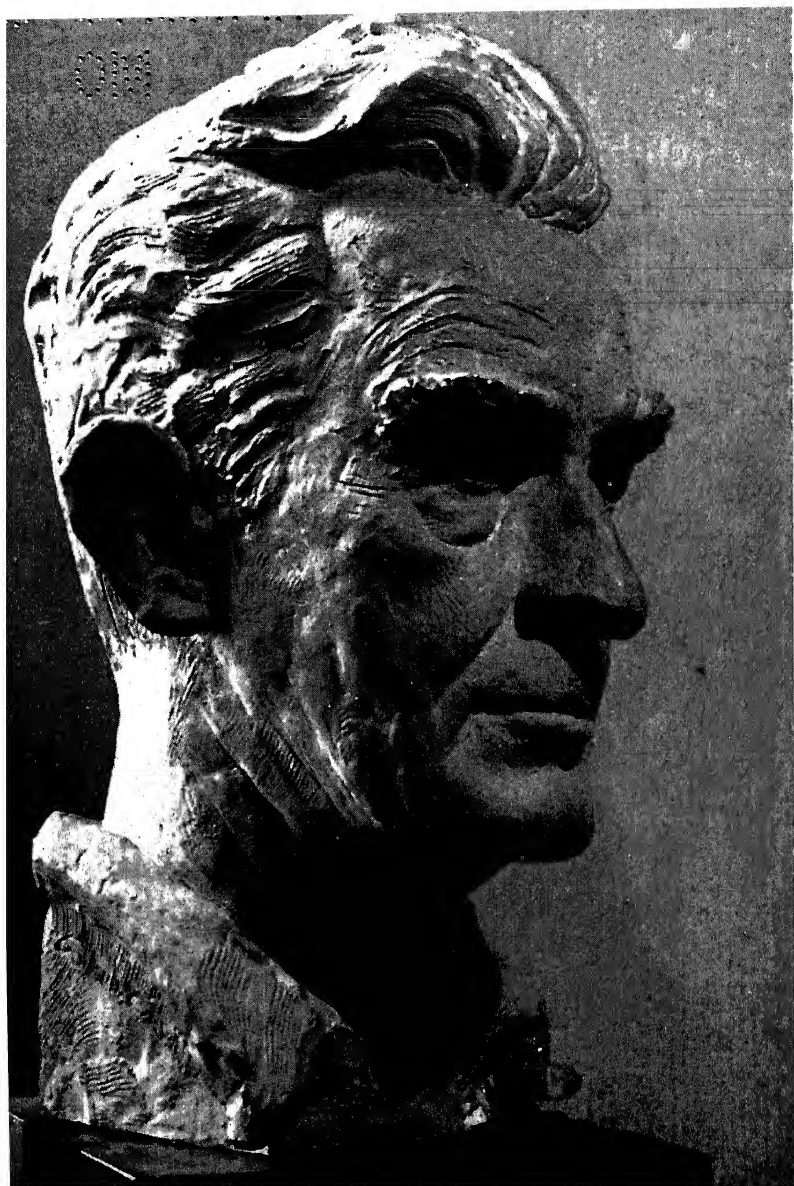
Even in discussing Grandma and the Flagg family, he always sees with the artist's vivid eye for color and character; with that insight and strength of personality which have brought his pencil portraits world renown; with the same caustic comment on human frailty you find in his caricatures.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said Flagg's pencil portrait of him "had flair"; movie star Jane Russell seemed to the artist, "the last word in sultritude." Clarence Buddington Kelland is "the lovable Gila Monster"; Secretary of the Navy Knox was "looking as if he were about to explode into a shower of tomato juice"; of Hedy Lamarr, "it would be only a deaf and blind man who didn't fall in love with her"—and there's Mickey Rooney for whom "I sharpened my most malicious pencil."

Generally recognized as the stormy Dean of the popular artists of our times, he has been a leader in the revolt against Victorianism.

It is probably an awareness of this which prompted his mother to sign—"Yes, Monty was a nice boy before he went to the Art Students League."

Dip into this book any place and you'll want to stay—especially if you like a dash of vinegar with your nostalgia.



James Montgomery Flagg, portrait head by Wheeler Williams
(*Photo by Alfred Pach*)

JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Roses AND
BUCKSHOT

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK

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To the last Puritan
—my Father

“Nothing matters but everything is of the utmost importance.”

—BEAU NASH

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ROSES AND BUCKSHOT

1. PELHAM MANOR, MOTT HAVEN, AND BROOKLYN

DOING AN autobiography is something like undressing in your bedroom window. Can you bring yourself to the point of imagining such a disgracefully silly performance? What can you look forward to? More than likely a dreadful exhibitionist who, sensing a possible audience across the street, will have sucked in his stomach and thrown out his chest as he does his strip tease for the neighbors' benefit.

I do not say this by way of apology. I am prompted more by my desire to try to explain to you this act, both shameful and shameless, of an egotist. If you have no other way of finding out, a visit to the shrine of my ancestors will convince you that, though I am not conceited, I am a vain creature. To get this thing straight, let's start at what was for me the beginning of it all.

I was born June 18, 1877, while visiting my grandfather (distaff) at his country house in Pelham Manor. When he found out who I was he died. He was a giant Irishman with a Lincoln beard and named James Montgomery Coburn; north of Ireland via Scotland.

His wife was a large angel with bonnets and Cashmere shawl—just the kind of grandmother I would have thought up if she hadn't existed. She had a lap as big as the Polo Grounds for me to weep my childish troubles into. I don't think I did such a sissy thing, but she had the lap for it in case.

I landed flat on my talcum powder in the Currier & Ives period, when horses imitated Merry-Go-Round gees, never touching hoof to earth and everybody was carefree and gay in a refined manner!

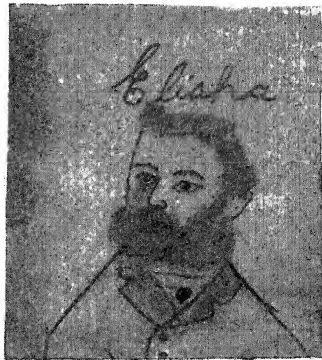
This was the epoch when really genteel folks had, believe it or not, "hushers"! A husher was a crocheted slip-over on the cover of a *pot de chambre*! I'll bet our dear Queen thought that one up! That was Refinement in its last throes! Putting drawers on piano legs was crude in comparison.

I just missed being my uncle's son. He was in love with the lady who decided to be my mother later, but my father his younger brother, being more belligerent, pushed him to one side and married my mother. So when I was born my uncle Francis, through sentimental reasons I suppose, took me to his heart, which I thought was damn white of him and he became my adored Francis! When I was born I got into the station two months before schedule with an embarrassing dearth of fingernails and eyelashes. But Francis didn't seem to love me any the less and walked me up and down during the first two weeks of my rebellion at being plucked from the tree of life before I was ripe—yelling bloody murder for two weeks on end, or so they say. I've felt the same way ever since. A born rebel.

I don't remember anything in particular before I was two. Incredulous people say I can't remember when I was two. That is untrue. I remember plenty—all happy. Nothing that mattered. My favorite aphorism is Beau Nash's "Nothing matters—but everything is of the utmost importance."

We were living then, for some reason or other, on Willis Ave. in Mott Haven, which is God knows what today, near 138th Street. The doorbell was a large white china thing that took a bit of yanking and responded in the kitchen by wagging a young cowbell with a spiral spring attached to it. The bells from other rooms were worked by pulling down a curved handle with a china knob on the end of it.

Portrait of my father drawn by
me at the age of 3 or 4—Picasso
studied under me then



Portrait of my grandmother drawn at the age of
fourteen



J.M.F. at the age of
three

J.M.F.'s daughter, Faith, looks into Arnold Genthe's lens over
her father's shoulder



In the front parlor—not living room—I remember huge paintings of my aunts in pantalettes, hoop skirts, and Leghorn hats with blue ribbons. They were just about to roll hoops—or play battledore and shuttlecock. It's badminton now.

There were huge mirrors with baroque frames and two fascinating Dresden figures about three feet high on a console, eighteenth century lady and gent. He had a three-cornered hat and knee breeches and she terrific skirts, holding on a delicately posed hand some sort of tropical bird. This kept getting knocked off and mended. There was an enthralling stereopticon—two square lenses under a hood with a wooden handle underneath and dozens of twin photos you pushed into a brass rack behind the lenses. Then you held it up and looked. The figures were gents in creaseless trousers, one foot crossed over the other and resting on its elegant toe. They all had side whiskers, mostly blond. They were standing in a very casual manner in front of some unbelievably grotesque stone formation in the Garden of the Gods in Colorado. The ladies were very subdued and complacent. They wore chignons and generally held Leghorn hats by their ribbons. They were so quiet. And happy. I think of those people as Yesterday Afternoon.

Being a first-born, and probably spoiled as the devil, I had a much nicer time of it all than later when I acquired a brother and a sister. A game I invented, which, by the way, I feel would still be exciting, was to wander through the house, upstairs and down, carrying a mirror and gazing into it. At the ceilings, stepping over the tops of doors, avoiding chandeliers—living the upside-down life of a house fly. I recommend it to bored children.

I used to stand peeking out through the blinds onto Willis Ave. on hot sunlit days, and an old colored mammy used to roll by sometimes and grin up at my window, calling out, "Ah see you, you pretty birdie!"

I toddled in one day to my Aunt Lottie's room, where she was in bed nursing her baby. Back in those days when the

old homestead wasn't a hospital, that apparently happened. I must have been startled at what I saw, because I ran back to my mother, excitedly calling, "Come quick—the baby's eating Aunt Lottie up!" That particular baby is at present Dr. I. O. Woodruff, one of the big shots at Bellevue—in spite of being fed in the wrong way.

Nights when my father and mother would go out to the theater or opera into town—how they got there from Mott Haven is a mystery to me—two other aunts would feed me and put me to bed while my parental gadabouts were enjoying Lester Wallack or Parepa Rosa. It was always good for a laugh to be held up by the armpits while I kicked off my petticoats. Next morning there would be a present for me of a package of oblong chocolates, each with a picture of a military gent under the little ribbons.

I remember an uncle (with a beard, of course), Uncle Og Woodruff. I didn't care particularly for Uncle Og. He interested me mildly. He'd camped in the wilds of Canada and brought back Canadian customs. One of them was having a cup of milk alongside his "Cracked Wheat" cereal, into which he dipped each spoonful of the cereal. That didn't make sense to me. In fact he got on my nerves as only a relative can get on a child's nerves. I got pretty sore at him one morning at breakfast, they tell me.

"Don't you understand Lingshish?" I said to him bitingly.

It was probably my intolerance at his not getting my reference to mountains as hump-backed land. Any thoughtful child of two would know that. Grownups are so dull.

I wasn't particularly astonished but I was definitely amused with the family I dropped into out of the hurly-burly. I will tell you about them. Some were smelly, some were lovable. Grandmother Coburn is delightful to my memory. She was what was called a Van Camp in New York. Grandfather Coburn was a builder and had started to build a house just off the Avenue for each of his children—he had eight—Margaret

Sanger was born much later. Then he died; and another Irishman, named McDermott, his lawyer, fixed everything so that McDermott had everything! So harder times came to the Coburns. They still owned a mountain in Ireland but didn't dare claim it. You know, Irish behind rocks. What the devil they could have done with a mountain is uncertain.

The Van Camps and the Coburns weren't arrogant. I get that from the Flaggs, who decided to start the American family in Watertown, Mass., in 1637. My grandfather Flagg, whom I am sorry to say I never met, was a musician and composer. A little song, called "Flowers, Wildwood Flowers," written by him with the words by his brother, Wilson Flagg, the naturalist, was sung to put many children to sleep including some English children across the water. He had a brother-in-law, Sam Lamb, whose wife (a great-aunt of mine) said she would never get weighed as "only cattle were weighed." One of the quintet was Augustus Flagg, the head of the publishing house of Little, Brown. His cousin, Israel Whitney, with many misgivings put Grandfather into one of his five banks. I believe Israel preferred to play the flute; which to me would be the choice of rotten apples. Banking was not as disreputable as it is today, but in any age playing the flute paralyzes your upper lip.

Great-Uncle Wilson, Grandfather's brother, was a sort of poetical Thoreau-like person, and my father as a lad had the privilege of wandering through the New England woods with him absorbing wood lore and bird lore.

I can remember my mild surprise in having to read aloud "The Morning Oratorio" out of McGuffey's Fifth Reader in school—by my great-uncle Wilson Flagg! He wrote the *Highways and Byways of New England* and other books. At the age of three I went (I suppose I was really taken, though I always thought of myself as *going* to a place, not being *taken*) to call on Uncle Wilson in his house in the woods. He let me choose a couple of wonderful seashells for myself that broadcast the roar of the sea when I put them to my ear. I have one of them

now. My austere Aunt "Caramel," as she was renamed by me, was present I believe.

But my grandmother always ruled the roost. She stands out in my mind as the spirit of the family. What a darling! I have lots to tell about that wonderful woman. Her three sons showered expensive presents on her and were so proud of her. It was with good purpose that those bewhiskered sons—Will, Francis and Elisha, my father—made obeisance to their mother, as indeed they did, in their funny ingrowing Yankee manner.

She was Mary Sophia Wesson, "the most beautiful girl in Worcester County" or so said H. B. Claffin, also of Worcester, who sought her out as a dancing partner. Those over fifty will know who H. B. Claffin was.

She and Grandfather were at the old Hotel Astor in the days of Lincoln and Grant when it caught fire. As the flames mounted higher she became exasperated at the deliberation with which Grandfather was dressing himself, decided something must be saved, and she threw a large mirror out onto Broadway.

The Civil War gave Grandfather a chance to escape from his desk at the bank. When he got his major's commission in the northern army, Grandmother paraded around the house in his complete uniform—and they say she was something to look at!

Grandfather lay ill of "camp fever" in Hilton Head, North Carolina, and Grandmother had to go to him. This was in '64. A Massachusetts Representative reluctantly escorted her to Washington on what he knew was a hopeless quest. He got her an appointment with Secretary Stanton.

"I will take you as far as the Secretary's door," he said, "and God have mercy on you—he's a woman hater!"

Grandmother's answer was probably the going equivalent of "Oh, yeah!" and she went in. She came out, to the utter astonishment of her friend, with her pass through the lines!

How she ever got there is not known, but she did—through the Confederate lines, to the camp at Hilton Head. She and Clara Barton, who later founded the Red Cross (she had a

double row of teeth in each jaw, by the way), got to be friends and were the only northern women down there.

Eventually Grandmother got Grandfather back to Massachusetts where he died. As a widow she had a bevy of children to support, which didn't faze her. She started the first apartment hotel in New York—with an *elevator*—at 434 Fifth Avenue, now the site of Lord and Taylor's Store. Then she started another one in Newport, Rhode Island, in the summer.

➤ My first newspaper interview happened when I was eleven. I alone with Grandmother in the White Mountains for the summer, and I remember her satisfaction when she was referred to as a lady of "the Old School." She was. As a child she was held up in her nurse's arms to see General Lafayette pass by! She had quaint eighteenth-century expressions like "not by a jugful." Being born in 1818 she really was not so far from the Revolution in thought. In her later days with thinning hair she affected wigs—she kept them on wooden blockheads with their elaborate "lady-finger" curls kept in trim, and she wore lace caps—with black ribbons and bows on week days and lavender ones for Sundays. She had an open contempt for all her daughters-in-law except my mother, whom she admired.

A ludicrous custom in New England, home of the emotionally costive, of not speaking to a member of the family with whom you have "fallen out" was to *write* notes to be delivered by someone to the party under a cloud. Sometimes it went so far as this for example:

"Will you tell Miss Flagg (in most cases my acidulous and conceited small aunt Sara) that I don't think much of her salad dressing—if she was the one who concocted it."

Then some equally nasty crack from "Miss Flagg" delivered in the third person and referring to her mother as "Madame Flagg"! In the long run all this sort of stuff rolled off Madame Flagg's back. The dear woman laughed. She was much more of a person than her spoiled youngest. We all knew that.

I spent many a twilight playing bezique and cribbage with that grandmother of mine. I always brought along a bag of lime drops. They were her favorite sweetmeats. When I was a kid she always folded into each letter to me a couple of crisp dollar bills.

In her last years, adored by us all, she had a paralytic stroke and had to have nurses. One of them, on the first night after she had prepared the old lady for bed, went to the window and stood looking out. Grandmother finally asked her what the big idea was. Nurse partly turned to her and said she was waiting for Mme. Flagg to take out her teeth. Delicate, like. Grandmother snorted and told the nurse she'd have to stand that way for an indefinite period, if that was what she was waiting for, as all her teeth were her own. She was 87.

She had been healthy all her life up to then, but one did have a family doctor—as a badge of respectability perhaps. So hers, in the old Boston days, was Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. I imagine that she was her own Autocrat at *her* Breakfast Table. I wish there had been a record of conversations between Dr. Holmes and his healthy patient.

Now all this stuff about my family is gossip. Some claim that such a thing is in bad taste; that it is disloyal. No one has said it but I gather some people feel that way. I think such revelations justified if they are interesting. It helps us learn about humans.

Loyalty to family as such doesn't seem to me pertinent. It gave me a laugh when Frank Crowninshield anathematized Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., as a renegade to his class! What do we fancy ourselves—British? But nuts! Family isn't sacrosanct to me. Every tub on his own bottom! There will always be rebels. *Vive Voltaire!* Long live Paine! To hell with the snobbery of inheritance!

My father was a very masculine person. He always wore a beard, and ordered things done "because-I-say-so." Life with Father! Strangely enough, in spite of his being strong and athletic, he couldn't intimidate me. On the other hand, he

unbent enough to delight me by reading *Alice in Wonderland* aloud to me. Although they don't know it, all super-masculine men are their own worst enemies. They have to work so hard to prove their masculinity.

Dad was away on the road a great part of the time. I seem to recall that he was either rolling up his hairbrush and comb in a huge silk bandana and putting it in a satchel or unrolling the whole thing and taking it out. There was no such thing as a suitcase in the eighties.

Although Dad wasn't a teetotaler, he rarely "touched the stuff." I wonder if it wouldn't have made him more cheerful if he had. Something seems to go sour if a healthy man abstains from all the so-called vices. Moreover, he was different from the regular New England Puritan. He was sincere. He wouldn't have voted "dry" and drunk secretly like the Prohibitionists. Neither of his older brothers were abstemious, although they were not overdoers. But Dad went the whole hog. A curious character, he was more virile than his brothers, yet he coldly refrained from pleasures most Occidentals find necessary. My Brahmin friend, Krishnamurti, was *totally* abstemious. He never even touched meat, tobacco, liquor, or women. That made him several up on my old man! But it didn't sour him, for Krishnamurti was gay, and cheerful and gracious to everyone. New Englanders, with only a couple of hundred years back of them, can't quite make the grade, while the Brahmins are a 10,000-year-old cult.

Dad was always attractive to women, and he appreciated their charm, too, at a certain distance. It was all rather like going through life sealed in a refrigerator car and imagining you have lived. He undoubtedly saved himself a lot of trouble. Still . . . I am convinced he never bedded with any woman but his wife. Before, during or after! A very careful man, Elisha!

Just for the record, I asked him, "When you were a traveling man in the old days, did you ever take a girl out to supper and then to bed?"

He said, "No—never!"

My brother laughed—he happened to be calling on Elisha too—and said, “Did you expect to get an honest answer?”

But that was mere persiflage. We *did* expect that honesty as well as that particular answer, for that is Dad’s main virtue—scrupulous honesty.

Nothing I could say when I was three prevented my parents from taking me to live in a boardinghouse in Brooklyn. On Sundays in the summertime my father hired a horse and buggy and drove Mother and me down to Brighton Beach where we had supper. Mine was “bramsy” punches. When the little sip of brandy began to get in its work they would lift me up onto the table so I could help Gilmore lead his celebrated band.

When I look at the Grand Central Station (which was *out of date before it was completed*) it’s amusing to remember the first station of red brick on that site. When we took a train to Boston we didn’t even start from there but from 26th Street and Fourth Avenue in cars drawn by horses up to the not-so-Grand Central!

The “stages,” public sleighs and horsecars were provided with straw on the floors in the wintertime—it helped keep our feet warm. It was colder then.

At the foot of the hills on horsecar lines there’d be a boy waiting with an extra horse. It fascinated me to see him trace hook onto the dash and watch the fresh horse help the other two nags up the incline. Then, on reaching the top, the boy would unhook his horse and drop off with a nonchalant wave of the hand.

New York was paved with Belgian blocks then, no smooth asphalt. I watched the workmen as they fitted the hard stone blocks together. It fascinated me to see them pour heated pebbles between these giant gray sugar lumps and fill the cracks with hot tar.

Since at the age of four I knew no better, I went to live with the whole damn Flag family in 144 Monroe Street (Brooklyn still), Mother and Father, Grandmother Flag, two

uncles, Will and Francis, two aunts, my cousin Stewart, a year and a half older and quite different from me, and his mother, his father—that being Uncle Will who always pulled himself along hurriedly in the street by his coat lapels. Oh yes, and there was my cousin Mabel, a nice little girl except that she would nauseate me by sucking her napkin ring. Of course it had to be a big house. I have been told that we all moved into one house to cheer up my uncle Will since he was despondent or something. It seems a naïve idea as a cure, especially if you knew the family. Extract of New England. Curiously enough it worked. The gang made a thorough job of mass gaiety especially on holidays. I know *I* had a good time.

Because the shows and tricks and songs were acted by all the uncles and aunts, that left only Grandma, Mother and us children as audience. First the performers stretched a big sheet between the double doors on which they had drawn or painted assorted sizes of nigger minstrels with the usual top hats, long-tail coats, striped shirts, some with banjos, and some with bones. Holes were cut in the sheet so that my uncles and Aunt Sara could stick their burnt-corked faces out. The ten-foot minstrel with the live face was incredible to me until I slipped backstage and saw my uncle Francis on a tall stepladder and the three-foot midget was my aunt's blacked-up face as she knelt behind the sheet.

Another delightfully frightening trick was performed by an uncle lying on his back under a table with his head sticking out. A tablecloth covered his entire body to just beyond his nose. His thick hair was brushed out wildly which made the beard. Eyebrows were painted above his eyes and his own eyebrows masked out with grease paint. Nostrils were added low on his forehead and a wide red mouth painted near his hairline which he manipulated gruesomely with his forehead muscles, rolling his upside-down eyes. It was shriek-making! After we had had our quota of horror, the mystery was explained to us.

By Christmas my uncle Will was restored to normalcy and

along with the others played horse with great jollity. Some New Englanders are like that. They can sulk and be 100% sourpusses and suddenly snap out of it and leap about with great and gay abandon. Always under control! When they are playing the fool with seeming recklessness they know just where the footbrake is. They have a grand hilarious time but you can't catch them napping even. They sleep on knapsacks. Wantonness with four-wheel brakes!

I suppose it was coincidental with my uncle's thorough recovery that he kept a drawer in the back library table full of torpedoes to hurl at singing cats. There is a healthy pleasure in breaking up a noisy blind date on a back fence.

On account of good behavior we were let out of Brooklyn and moved back to our own town, to 317 East 86th Street, which is now in the heart of Nazidom.

Never since have I heard such a racket as that made by the loose windows in a private bus going over these cobbles to hear Strauss's *Gypsy Baron* at the Casino on 39th Street and Broadway with a bunch of cousins.

In one act I remember the scene showed a hut on a rise of mud where the Gypsy Baron lived, I suppose—the rolls of lava-like stage mud didn't impress me as being real but as a visualization of a persistent nightmare of mine, in which I had to stick millions of pins into acres of mud lumps! Nevertheless I was always excited ecstatically by stage scenery and the make-believe.

I first became a Savoyard in 1885. The Gilbert & Sullivan operas were becoming popular over here and I played the umbrella bearer to the Mikado in an amateur performance in a country hotel in Rutland, Mass., where my people had gone for the summer. Little did I imagine then that a half century later I would be friends with the principals of the D'Oyly Carte Company—that I would even follow them to London to see them perform at Sadler's Wells! Well, that isn't strictly true—it wasn't the *whole* company that lured me to London!

But it happened to be the most *beautiful* member of the company. Of which more later.

The first play I ever saw—I guess I was about six—was Denman Thompson in *Uncle Josh*. One scene I remember was Tremont Street in Boston with the gilded dome of the State House in the distance. I was just crazy to get up beyond the footlights and walk around with those privileged beings. They weren't actors to me. When good old Uncle Josh threw the villain right through the window glass I was so happy. Denman Thompson must have been very, very strong!

About this time lawn tennis was seeping into America and it seeped into the Flaggs. They went mad in the back yard with funny curved rackets and hard balls. This was 1881. The whole thing bored me stiff—I didn't like games. My energetic dad with his side whiskers—everybody wore side whiskers then—formed the Phantom Club. They were young people nuts about tennis, dressed in white with round caps tasseled on top and knitted in colored stripes by the ladies most interested in the contestant. Can't you see it? Knitted caps and sideburns? Dad persuaded Park Commissioner Crimmins to let his club build a court and he became thereby the first person to play tennis in Central Park. Now look at the place. For years he and his cousins and his sisters but not his aunts played there every Saturday. They would come home in the twilight with English striped blazer thrown over shoulder in the "stage" they hired for the club, assuaging their thirst with Rose's Lime Juice and seltzer.

My aunt Sara played tennis like a demon—she had the hand and arm of a man. She was a vigorous, conceited creature who liked to be waited on. When she commanded Stewart and me to "shag" balls she had knocked out of bounds, I, being more intelligent, refused saying, "Go chase 'em yourself." This was rude but logical. Stewart retrieved balls dutifully. He was Sara's favorite nephew. Sara used him unscrupulously to fetch handkerchiefs, books, balls and whatever. I saw no percentage in that. Being an aunt's favorite didn't strike me as a hell of

an ambition. I reserved that goal for a later period; with beautiful ladies who were not blood relations.

Although Stewart remained enshrined in her peculiar New England heart as her beloved nephew he did nothing at all for her in later life. In fact, he allowed himself a permanent furlough from her by getting killed in the World War; while the questionable pleasure of supporting an inimical aunt remained to me.

After I became an established illustrator my aunt further endeared herself to me when she saw my drawings of imaginary girls by asking in her sympathetic way—"Why do you draw servant girls, Monty?"

This dreadful aunt was always disliked by my dad. She took a fiendish pleasure in goading him, as also she did in different degrees the rest of the family. She was charming to outsiders. They thought she was wonderful. She thought she was wonderful. We thought she was lousy. We knew her.

An incident in the New Hampshire mountains one summer over fifty years ago sticks in my memory. Dad and my aunt and some others were sitting about under the trees after tennis. She was showing off to the hotel guests with her Elisha-baiting. Dad warned her. She laughed sarcastically and went right on. Dad finally retaliated—and was I delighted! He took a two-quart pitcher of ice water and emptied it on that creature's head. She couldn't do anything but sputter. Of course she was mad, but she was forced to retire to change. It was lovely! I couldn't help but recall her namesake, who was ducked "for a common scold" in 1637 in Massachusetts!

My dad had to fight his brothers' battles as boys, too. Dad was taking no back talk from anybody. He was not the type.

I was glad my father could boast of at least one sweet sister, Elizabeth, a gentle soul beloved by all and browbeaten by one, her younger sister Sara. Elizabeth and my much loved uncle Francis were the two gentle ones of the family. The others were tougher—more Flagglike.

Elizabeth and Francis were delicate of feature; distinctly

darlings. What one *thinks* of as aristocratic. More otherworldly, they looked as though they were just visiting this earth—a bit too foreign to be entirely at home here. They were musicians so they both went to Munich in a paddle-wheel steamer to study—he singing and she the piano.

Their father introduced chamber music into the swanky haunts of Boston where he chose to play the flute (although he could play all instruments) with a quintette of cousins.

Then Elizabeth at seventeen married a man much older than herself, an Englishman named Stephenson, who took her about in English society, where shy Lizzie was tongue-tied but happy in spite of it, for she adored her elderly husband with a romantic fervor sometimes wished on poetic females. She was far from frustrated. Her youngest brother, my dad, was a bit impressed by the impudent superiority of Mr. Stephenson, who presented him with a pongee suit with lead buttons which he brought from China. This was in 1870 and Dad was still wearing the trousers on hot days up to 1943—the seat gave out then.

I wish I could draw Uncle Francis as I saw him so that you could see him too. There aren't many men just like him today. He was tall and handsome, ascetic, with a sweet humorous expression; reserved to the last degree. (Few could get past his haughty aloofness which was probably, to use the argot of the present day, a defense mechanism.) I love to remember that I was his favorite nephew. Almost every week Uncle Frank came over to take me out for a Sunday adventure in the Park, up the Hudson, up the *funiculaire* at High Bridge, any old place. I remember how amused he was when I asked him if he carried a stick to keep his hands out of trouble. I was about five.

When he went to directors' meeting he always gave me the ten or twenty-dollar gold piece, which was apparently the prevailing price for his appearance.

That may have been one of the reasons why I resented his getting married at the advanced age of 38. He no longer

brought me those gold pieces. I would solve so many of my introspective problems if this were so. No, I'm afraid those coins were only something very pretty.

When I visited him in his house in Summit, N.J. (he always had a five-pound box of Maillard's bonbons which I did my best to demolish), I put up with his new family to be with him.

I think one of the reasons I was so attached to him was that he had an instantaneous laugh for my childish puns. He was sympatico!

I remember one he liked. He had a wheezy pug dog named Clover. I told him the reason the fleas in Summit were so happy was because all of them were in Clover. That amused him. When I could get that uncle of mine to laugh I was happy.

He used to ask me to lunch when he was Vice-President of the American Express Co., and we went to the Café Savarin. In case you are too young to know, it was a very different place in those days.

"And what will the young gentleman have?" the waiter said one day.

I bristled at the phony implication of maturity and said:

"I am not a young gentleman—I am a boy and I want cold diplomat pudding!"

Somewhat to my surprise, this sent my uncle into spasms.

His regular routine was a chicken sandwich and a pint of champagne at his desk. Between sips and bites he told the rest of the American Express Co. what to do; including Mr. Fargo, the President. Uncle Francis was offered the presidency thrice—and thrice he turned it down.

I am pleased to remember that our family never had picnics. We preferred eating indoors with our feet under a table (instead of our flanks) to sharing our food with ants and flies and mosquitoes. Always a light eater to the point where people exclaim, I nevertheless liked certain things with enthusiasm, such as hashed cream potatoes in restaurants: never at home

because no cook can make them right. At home, anybody's home, they taste like stewed potatoes—flavorless.

Children's passionate prejudices about food are curious. I instinctively liked nothing they said was good for me. If they had let me alone, I believe I wouldn't have suffered from indigestion, as I used to in my early years. I loved the uncooked lower crust of apple pie; the restaurant kind. I didn't like meat, but my father forced me to eat it. Hence the term "forced meat." I loved oatmeal or "opmeal" as I called it. It is still my favorite food; that and caviar. Half a century later, when I took my dad and my young daughter to the Waldorf to supper, I ordered canapés of caviar. I was pleased that my daughter hated her first nibble. That gave me two canapés. If one canapé is good, nine are that much better. I like to look back to the trips on the *Queen Mary*, where for the first time in my life I had all the caviar I wanted.

I still think of our stay in Brooklyn as rather a shameful interlude—as a Bostonian looks on Somerville or a Londoner on Brixton or Golder's Green. Snobbish? Who isn't.

I got out of Brooklyn once in that year (the hard way) when my dad took me over to New York to Vesey Street. I had fallen off the grape trellis in our back yard and ruptured myself—whatever that was. I was only four but I shall never forget the indignity of having to take my little pants off and of lying flat on a shiny leather sofa while a horrible old man probed and pushed me and measured me for a truss that my mother had to keep re-covering with chamois because it bit into me for a year afterward. I have loathed old men with hair on the backs of their hands and seal rings ever since. As a matter of fact, I don't like old people. There is something obscene about old age; like wilting flowers. Now here's a curious thing. At the first sign that roses in a jar are beginning to droop I chuck them out. On the other hand, my dad, who is ninety, keeps them on and nurses them till the last petal is brownish! A sort of clinging to the dregs. Pitiful.

The basic fault of parents is that they are all amateurs.

I claim that I nearly died of pneumonia as a child. But my parents said I never even had it. Parents can't tell the truth if it makes them out less than perfect in their memory or tenderness.

In regard to the latter virtue, they absolutely and heatedly denied that my mother snapped my ears with a big whalebone when I was impossible, or that my father made me lie down on my bed and whaled my calves with any stick I happened to have brought into the house. In spite of these lapses of parental memory I always loved my father.

As these are honest impressions I must say that I never had any distinct filial piety or terrific affection for my mother. I remember some pleasant things she did when I was quite young, such as spooning out some of her breakfast coffee on a piece of toast for me when my father wasn't looking. She said she had to do little things like that to offset the harshness of my father. Then, I suppose to offset her offsetting, she would snap our ears with a steel whalebone when we were unbearable. And, of course, she denied having done it. As a matter of fact, both parents denied in later years quite a number of things that I clearly recollected. How could they have been less than perfect?

(As time marched on my mother gradually was caught in the quicksands of esoteric mysticism; going into it deeper and deeper till she became an outright fanatic, mainly in Theosophy. She believed everything she read and could talk of nothing else. She proselytized anyone she came in contact with, until it became a thundering bore to all the males in the family. And, added to that mania, she was a militant vegetarian.)

"What kind of corpse do you want for dinner, Lish?" she asked Dad each morning.

On that point I agreed with her thesis, but not with her sales talk. The natural human reaction to an insulting question like that would be to say, "Oh, let's start with a dipper of

warm blood, and then could you get us some cat's brains on toast?"

(Fanaticism usually defeats its own ends.)

There has been so much bilge written about "mother." Through the years the very word has become banal to me. I might have felt differently if I had a different mother, but so much sentiment, so many songs have been evoked by the idea that it leaves me quite cold.

My mother was a handsome and distinguished-looking woman. She was a "good" woman—a "good" wife and possibly a "good" mother. Her tears of sentiment were on tap. At odd times she thought of charming little tricks to tempt the palates of her offspring. Obviously she had imagination and was kindly. She was clever and tireless in her care of her family. Her husband rightly came first, although this in no way lessened her solicitude for her children. She was a wonderful cook and could make clothes for her kids. She herself had been brought up in the utmost luxury. You might say, "Well, if you had a mother like that, there must be something wrong with you if you didn't love her." Maybe so. Nevertheless I didn't. I try to think why. There is always a reason. I have come to the conclusion that it all didn't seem real or exciting to me. I am pleased in retrospect that there was no morbid "silver cord" stuff in her about her sons. That could also be chalked up to her credit. I think the underlying resentment I had toward her was because she wanted to dominate and to run me. It came to a head when I was nineteen when she spied on me and followed me and my sweetheart and arrogantly cornered me in my trysts and told me to leave my Lady-Love and go do my water-colors. I disliked her completely from that moment.

2. ESCAPE FROM BROOKLYN —TO PARK AVENUE, RUTLAND, AND UNION SQUARE

FATHER finally broke away from the clan and set up housekeeping for us at 1429 Park Avenue in a nice apartment. The numbers have since been radically changed. It was then near 81st Street. I have a memory, a ghost of a memory perhaps, of feeling relief and sort of a renewed dignity of home life. Mother had a talent for furnishing with taste within the modest means of Dad's salary, and in disregard of the Victorian miasma that stunk up the Anglo-Saxon world. This was in 1885, when it was considered daring not to have whatnots. The bustle was a tufted monstrosity on the behinds of well-to-do dames and a wad of newspapers on the same portions of the lower classes. The bustle lasted five years from 1880 to 1885, when it found its way into the ashcans. And don't let anybody kid you that it was extant at *any other period*. Musical comedy producers please note! Also men did *not* wear sideburns in the *nineties*! Men began parting their hair on the side again in 1900; *circa* Florodora Sextette.

We had two little balconies outside of our living room with plants in pots. I used to blow soap bubbles which floated out over the sunken tracks of the N.Y. Central. The snorts from passing engines would blow them up sky high. I also threw lumps of dirt on passers-by. Nice child. I should have had more lickings than I had. I was then about eight; perhaps the most dreadful age for a boy. I didn't kill anybody. That's the best

thing I can think of to say about me. Because I realize what a horrible little boy I must have been I have never liked the species. I never played with children because they were silly. It has astounded me that some men crave sons. It is to me a morbidly fatuous urge to repeat nature's mistakes.

As I got older I began to like little girls. And I've continued. I fell madly in love, at the age of eight up in Rutland, Mass. She was the first of my annual grand passions. Her name was Ruth and she had two sisters, Harriet and Clara. Clara was always crying, "Hawwiet, I wanta cwacker!" Ruth wore a plain gold bangle on her little brown wrist and she was very pretty. She is a former Congresswoman today by the name of Ruth Pratt. I haven't seen her for quite a while—not since 1885!

The Flaggs and their intimates, numbering a party of at least fourteen, spent several summers on a hill at Rutland in the exact center of Massachusetts. The Muschopauge House there was the scene of my first *grande passion*. Ruth Pratt and I were about eight years old. Maybe she was a bit younger. As if anybody could be younger than eight!

I began drawing at two—not very well. Not, as a matter of record, any better than Rube Goldberg and Ham Fisher draw today! I really wasn't what you'd call a draftsman. I'm afraid I was just a cartoonist. I used to take some discarded balbriggan drawers of my father's (I hope they were discarded) and cut them into profile men and sew up the outline; all except the mouth. Then I would feed them bits of paper and push the meal down through their forms. I forget what the ultimate gesture was. It was an entirely engrossing pastime anyhow.

In my eighth summer up in Rutland I had a paintbox but I lacked a brush. So I knelt at the lap of my dear grandmother Coburn and she cut a lock of my hair and I tied it onto a stick. Then I had a paintbrush. For the rest of that summer I wandered all the sunlit hours through the hills with a basket in

which I had my paints and a pad and a spool of cotton and needle and scissors. I used to cut and peel off beautiful silvery bark from the birches and fashion it into crude canoes. Sometimes I would paint mountains. Sometimes I would kill striped adders. Sometimes I would climb a birch till the top began folding over and let me down to earth. That was very exciting.

Sometimes I worked on a small log cabin I was making between four trees. There was nothing you could do with it but to crawl into the little doorway, sit on the smashed grass floor and then crawl out again. But it was fairly satisfactory.

Again I would eat a piece of blueberry cake I had filched from the breakfast table for just such an emergency. I liked pushing aside the hard shiny checkerberry leaves with my toe and gathering the bright red checkerberries—wintergreen to you.

I sometimes went in swimming with some country boys, including a husky young very black nigger boy. When he swung naked from the limb of a tree he looked like a big gorilla to me.

He was quite a bit older than we whites. With gleaming teeth he'd talk of "hoors," as he pronounced it, leaving us vaguely disturbed and fascinated.

I got a real thrill out of the church fairs at the little white Revolutionary church by the Rutland Common. A lovely smell of cut wild flowers hung about the brightly lit little booths. One booth I remember with pleasure had a big tub full of water and was screened halfway with a cloth. A little boat came out under the screen. You put a dime on the deck and shoved it gently under the mysterious screen. In a few seconds it came back with a cheap little paintbox or a tiny toy sloop or some such thing as a present on its deck. And the Punch and Judy show. That was tops! Those characters were real to me. Punch and Judy, Toby and the Devil, Jack Ketch, the Hangman, and the Policeman!

A much loved member of our family was Cousin Watt Britton. He was a lazy, charming son of my great-aunt Elizabeth.

He wasn't bearded like his cousins. He sported a blond handlebar mustache. Thick glasses enlarged his handsome, lazily laughing eyes. Except on occasions he never exerted himself. He was spoiled by his rich mother. She was rich because she married a successful gambler named McKee. It was typical of Cousin Watt that once, when his cousins urged him to race them around the circular drive at the Muschopauge, he reluctantly joined them, pipe in mouth, and beat them all handily—still with the pipe in his mouth.

Watt had a setter named Phil. A newcomer, admiring the dog, asked Watt if he could do any tricks.

"Tricks," drawled Watt. "No, he does what I tell him."

Then he turned to the dog. "Phil," he said, "go over to the store and get me an egg!" You could see the general store across the Common from the piazza where we were sitting. Phil shot out like a coyote and headed for it. In a few minutes he came back and into Watt's hand dropped an unbroken egg.

One day my dad and a bunch of other guests cornered the manager of the Muschopauge House, Mr. Bartlett, and told him how they felt.

"You are letting Jews in here," they said. "It must stop or we don't come back!"

This was 1885. It didn't stop, and we didn't return. Let's face it. This is no new "intolerance." There must be a reason. There always is. Politicians avid for the vote won't listen to the undertones; the principle causes of the unpopularity of people. It's hush-hush and that isn't helpful either. No law can force people to like people they don't like. Laws like this anti-bias law are too sweeping and only add to the trouble. Just as a marriage can't force a man to keep on loving his wife if he doesn't.

The well-known writer van Paassen wrote me asking my opinion on racial and religious prejudice. I suggested that a possible sweetening of the social air would be to open schools to teach Jews to eliminate their antisocial faults. Van Paassen was horrified at what he called my "anti-Semitism." I told him

that was rot and that he obviously didn't want an honest opinion. A few days later a member of the commission to Washington sent over to build up American public sentiment in favor of a Jewish army to fight Hitler, a native Jew of Palestine (I have forgotten his name, but he was a very attractive and intelligent man) called on me in reference to my making a poster for them. I agreed. When I told him of my correspondence with van Paassen and my school suggestion, he didn't approve of van Paassen's stand and said that I was right!

Racial antagonisms that have been building through centuries cannot be wiped out in a minute of passing laws. Leave it to time and education!

My cousin Stewart brought home all the routine childhood diseases like measles, chicken pox, mumps, etc., and one after another gave most of them to me and his sister, thereby making it unnecessary for me to attend school until I was seven. After that was over I started in at a public school in New York City. All I remember regarding this first phase of my schooling is singing "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" in unison, and that I was envious of the more lavish luncheons brought by the little Jewish boys, particularly the sausage they always had. I skipped classes and was sad leaving my teachers. I especially adored Miss Tingley who quietly squelched protests by her "Possess your soul in patience and await further developments" and the popular Miss Meeks, vital, humorous and full-bosomed—all qualities still indispensable to my approval. I was plagued in those years with frequent sick headaches. When I had one I used to walk quietly out the Visitors' Door, thus avoiding to ask for permission to leave, walk over to Park Avenue and sit on the stone edging of one of the tunnel openings of the New York Central until school was out. By waiting until then I would evade parental questions. My headache was enough to grapple with without cross-examinations, too.

When I was eleven I walked up to my waist in snow to school only to find there was no school that day. It was March

12, 1888. The horsecars were buried in the drifts with nothing showing but the tops of their stovepipes.

My dad and I could both qualify for membership in the Blizzard of '88 Club but haven't tried. For my part I don't like old men. My dad is ninety but not old. Most people of that age are.

I can see him now as he looked on that terrible March twelfth. He arrived home in a deerstalker cap, à la Sherlock Holmes, and broke the ice out of his beard with hot wet towels over the bathtub. He had been caught in the full fury of the storm at Worth Street, whence he walked five miles to 81st Street. He lost his hat and found a young woman overcome in a snowdrift. He carried her for about a mile to her home, then continued on to ours.

When I was twelve I was sent to Dr. Chapin's School on Madison Avenue. Much to my relief it was a private school. I was fed up with my years of public schooling. Chapin's was run on a more or less English pattern. I liked it and I learned things.

The school stimulated me—especially sarcastic, scholarly, witty Mr. Readio, a born teacher who took no sass from rich men's sons. He slapped young Milliken's face for obvious insolence and we all said, "Right!"

The drawing classroom appealed to me most; although I was surrounded by boys who looked upon it as a chore and a bore. It was an opinion in which they were right—for them.

Mr. Chichester, the "drawing master," a suppressed, quiet gent, let me draw anything I wanted to. I would have anyway. He saw he couldn't do much about me since even at that age I drew better than he could.

There was a nasty incident in an otherwise healthy school. A poor, emotionally befuddled Irishman, the English history teacher, was too affectionate with a vapid, pretty lad in our grade. He held the boy on his knee during class secretly caressing the little punk and letting him off all penalties for

bum scholarship. It became a scandal and the teacher was fired. A short time later I saw the unhappy man sitting on the curbstone weeping into his hat.

Dr. Chapin, the head, was a martinet who knew his stuff. He told us to learn the prepositions governed by the ablative in Latin as a doggerel rhyme thus: "A, a, ab, absque, de, prae, pro, tenus and sine corum, palum, cum, ex, e."

I have as he promised us never forgotten the list. And a damn lot of good it ever did me!

Readio made cracks I have never forgotten, such as, "Smuggling, although criminal, is not unethical."

At recess of course we played Prisoner's Base and Red Rover, and in the spring the marble bags came out. This was the annual lure to the young hooligans from the East Side, who ganged up on us in a sort of Town and Gown battle. Bob Boyd, our class leader, fearlessly grinning, never let them get away with anything. He sailed into the leader of the muckers, beat the bejesus out of him, and sent him and his gang back to the shadows of the Gashouse District.

At fourteen Dad's financial status did not include any more Dr. Chapin for me. So I was sent to the Horace Mann School, then in University Place. My sister Margaret went with me. I hated that school, as coeducation was "sissy" to me. I roller-skated to school every decent day, following the Fifth Avenue "stage" which carried my sister. It was an eight-mile round trip but I saved a dime a day which I exchanged for cheap peanut pralines from the dust-blown guinea's pushcart in Union Square. Horace Mann was somehow a part of Teachers College whose prexy at that time was Nicholas Miraculous Butler. This was fifty-four years ago. My patient little Latin teacher was visited at the school every once in a while by her enormous football hero brother Big Bill Edwards and we goggled at him with awe. I met him again a half a century later when he was Collector of the Port. He was even huger and just as genial.

I was drawing one morning in the drawing classroom when

my old friend Mr. Chichester of Chapin's came to visit the Horace Mann. He was very cordial to me.

"Well, Flagg," he said, "I *thought* you'd wind up in a place like this!"

I told him indignantly that I hadn't "wound up" and I wasn't "in a place like this" of my own choice. I added that I didn't intend staying there after June, that I disliked the stinking place, and that there wasn't one person in the dump I ever wanted to see again.

At sixteen I made my own decisions about such matters as, for instance, whether or not I should go to college. Nevertheless I used to have talks with Dad and he would give me his ideas.

I remember his telling me about a millionaire he knew who decided that it would be better for his two young sons to "see the White Elephant," as the phrase was. So he escorted them to "dens of vice" and let them participate in all the city's night life to the hilt. He operated on the principle that, in order to prevent smallpox, a sample of that early scourge should be introduced into the healthy body of a child.

It didn't work the way the millionaire father intended. The boys became drunks, and one of them was found dead in a whorehouse by his young wife and the police. Home influence of a sort.

I feel that home influence is greatly exaggerated in the minds of educators; at any rate with regard to its effect on the young of positive character. In my case my mother's preachments merely irritated me. My dad's pressure was sporadic. I did as I chose to do. I think there may be an overall influence in so far as manners are concerned.

As a youth I came and went as I pleased, and I'm sure that being financially independent had quite a bit to do with it. In my twelfth year I had sold my first drawings for reproduction to *St. Nicholas*—for ten dollars. They were illustrated Latin axioms. Tudor Jenks, the assistant editor, took me under his wing and was my guide, philosopher and pal for many years.

When I was not quite sixteen I was already firmly established on the staffs of the two leading humorous magazines of the day, *Life* and *Judge*, and had been for two years. I was no longer interested in formal education. All my friends were grownups, including two Englishmen—Oliver Herford and Reginald Birch. Then at St. Nick's there was Mr. Clark, managing editor for Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge; Mr. Chapin, and Mr. Drake with side whiskers. I was a privileged character in the *Century* offices and had the run of the place, spending many after-school hours poring over with great joy originals of fine illustrators of the period—Frost, Abbey, Kemble, Blum, Taber, Rinehart, Smedley, Pyle, Birch and Herford.

Jenks was "Tudor" to me. One day he came back to his desk where I was waiting for him and asked me if I'd like to take a squint at a young writer from India who was talking to editors in a room with glass windows down the hall. We tiptoed down the hall and rubbered at a bespectacled black-haired young man who was talking to Robert Underwood Johnson, whose son, Owen Johnson the novelist in later years, became a great friend of mine. Tudor whispered jocularly,

"His name sounded like 'Barnyard Stripling.'"

This was the lad Kipling who was never offered a peerage because he made an allusion to Queen Victoria as "the Widow of Windsor!" The British Crown muffed an honor to itself.

Dear Oliver is gone and so is Reggie Birch. They were great artists of the Edwardian period. Having such gifted and charming people as friends—thinking, of course, of Tudor Jenks first—children my own age bored me. I knew there were such people as children, but they didn't register in my mind.

Such a publishing scene is gone with the wind. It was always afternoon. Bowls of fresh flowers on wide window sills, quiet good taste, lofty ceiling, mellow mahogany, mellow people who moved with quiet sureness and tolerant humor; ah, yes, possibly a bit smug! That was my impression of the *Century* Company's distinguished atmosphere.

Now that I'm thinking of Tudor Jenks—marvelous name, isn't it?—I'd like to tell you something about him.

It was his joy to encourage young artists and advise and help them. He was a big-shouldered, fat man with a big, mostly bald head fringed with curly hair. He looked like a judge; his eyes very full and solemn when he made some ridiculous remark. He always smelt of India ink and in his vest pocket always carried little sticks of it with gilt lions on the end. I think he dissolved them to make ink. He called himself a hack writer and later on a failure. His kind of failure would be written down in the book of gold Abou ben Adhem's angel carried. In his youth he hoped to be an artist and gave it up reluctantly. He had studied art in Paris; at the atelier Julian's, of course. Like so many would-be artists, he had aspirations that he couldn't make transpire. So he became a lawyer after he left Yale. He decorated his letters with intelligent, old-fashioned little drawings. They were much like Thackeray's drawings in their brambly, eighteenth-century technic. Later he quit the law and became an editor and a writer of children's stories, some few of which I illustrated. On his cluttered desk at St. Nick he always had a great stack of fresh postcards. With every mail the postman stretched over and handed him a postcard. Then Tudor would take a pocket chessboard out of one of his huge pockets, make a change of the flat celluloid chessmen, return it to his pocket and write some cabalistic signs on a postcard and hand it to the smiling postman who had waited.

While art cannot be taught, good taste can. Here are two examples of Tudor's technical wisdom. I brought him a drawing of a sad-looking boy with a silly verse attached, about wishing he'd been born grown-up. Tudor squashed that one by pointing out the unpleasant sequence of thought engendered in the idea. At another time I showed him a drawing of a boy standing with his legs apart. Between them you could see the horizon with a church steeple. Tudor showed me that the dirty-minded (How many there are!), because the lines

of the horizon focused one's eyes upon it, would attach some stupid significance to the boy's crotch! This was practical advice on what to avoid in drawings.

Some years after, when my first wife and I returned home from Paris, I wanted her to meet Tudor Jenks. He came to lunch with us at a restaurant since we had no home at the time. She was delighted with a man who could say when asked what he'd like to eat: "Oh, just slathers of ice cream!" My dear friend, the Failure.

But a wife always seems to do something dismal to an old friendship. You are hoping she will see your friend with *your* eyes. But queerly and horribly enough it is *you* who are looking at him with *her eyes*!

Now if you'll pick up your things we will step back to the year I digressed from—the exciting moment at the age of fourteen when I got my first check from *Life*; the original humorous weekly, not this modern photomural. With that check for \$8.00 I started out as a regular member of the staff. I stayed with them for over twenty years from that day. At the same time I served on the staff of *Judge*, the rival humorous magazine of those days.

I have an affectionate memory of the men who ran those two magazines—the five M's of *Life*—Mitchell, Miller, Metcalf, Masson and Martin—and the one big chief on *Judge*, Grant Hamilton. In the latter instance the affection was, I know, reciprocated.

John Ames Mitchell, the founder and owner of *Life*, was known to us as "the General." We artists used to sit on a long bench on Tuesday mornings waiting our turn to tackle the General. If a chap came out of Mitchell's office with his drawings back, it wasn't necessarily a rejection. He might be headed for the "studio" as we called the corner of the rear of the room. The table there had pens and ink, colors, scrapers, brushes. It was where we made alterations to suit the General.

Sometimes some of us would suggest a wickedly ribald idea

and the General would laugh, scraping one end of his mustache with the back of his fingers.

"We'll save that for the last number," he would say; or, "We must remember the old lady sitting on her porch in New Hampshire."

There was also his invariable line if he didn't like a joke or a drawing—"That doesn't steal my heart away."

Charles Dana Gibson, the greatest social cartoonist of America in his day, since he was the backbone of *Life* probably didn't hear that line often. Through his inimitable drawing he actually changed the bearing and the style of the American girl. The Gibson Girl was the feminine ideal of two generations, and her creator the most famous American artist of his day. I am shocked to find young people today who have never heard of him!

From the age of fourteen on I was doing about twenty jokes and drawings a week, selling the rights of reproduction to about five and tearing up the rejections. Eventually I had eighteen drawings in an Easter number of *Life*. This seems to have been some kind of record. (Note: Norman Anthony in his *How to Grow Old Disgracefully* thought *he* had a record when *nine* of his drawings appeared in one number! Just a couple of braggarts!)

James S. Metcalf was an intimate friend of mine over a long period of years. He was the dramatic editor and critic of *Life*, born a New Yorker, an authority on the drama, a great sport and also—a gent. His column carried a lot of weight in those days. True to the tradition of *Life*, which was always attacking civic evils, he constantly attacked the Jewish theater managers for "degrading and debauching" the stage. Klaw and Erlanger, the most prominent of the managers of their time, were his pet hates. Not liking his criticisms, they barred him from all the theaters they controlled. Jim brought suit and lost. It was an interesting trial. Then, being part owner of *Life*, he wrote a terrific diatribe against the Jews, saying they were hated because they were "grasping, greedy and greasy!" In

an editorial he threw down the gauntlet to them and rejected all of their advertising!

Can you imagine that happening today, in New York at least? Metcalf was a Yale grad. One time when he was going up to New Haven to deliver a lecture on the stage, he asked me my opinion as to the practice of college boys making up as women in plays. I told him that I thought it was a bad influence unless done as clowning, that it fostered latent tendencies toward effeminacy. He agreed.

When Prohibition—the sumptuary law that our then President, Mr. Hoover, called a “Noble Experiment”—was slapped on us, Jim had a hogshhead of the finest Bourbon whiskey placed in a corner of his living room and draped a piece of embroidery over it. Like most Americans he wouldn’t support a law put over by a fanatical minority.

Grant Hamilton was the big shot on *Judge*. Although little John Schleicher was the editor, Hamilton really was the brains of the magazine. He was a big-bodied, big-hearted man, beloved by all the artists. He was, moreover, the kind of man whose face proclaims that he could not do an ignoble act. Once in a blue moon you see a man with a face like that. My friend Ben Bernie had such a face. It’s very thrilling. Oh, yes, Webster—“Webbie” the cartoonist—father of “Mr. Milquetoast,” has that sort of a mug.

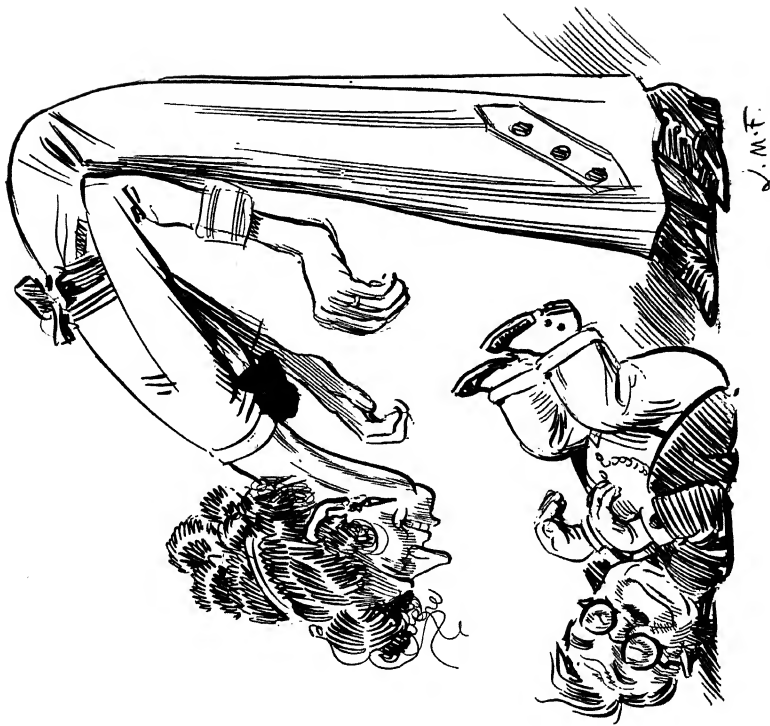
When Grant Hamilton knew that Penrhyn Stanlaws wanted to go through Princeton he arranged to give him enough steady work to support him during his college years. As a result the dainty Stanlaws Girl became a part of the American scene. As the years went on I did a great deal of work for Grant Hamilton and was naturally gratified one time when he said:

“Flagg, you don’t even need to submit ideas to me. Whatever you do will go in *Judge*. You know just as well as I do what’s right for us!”

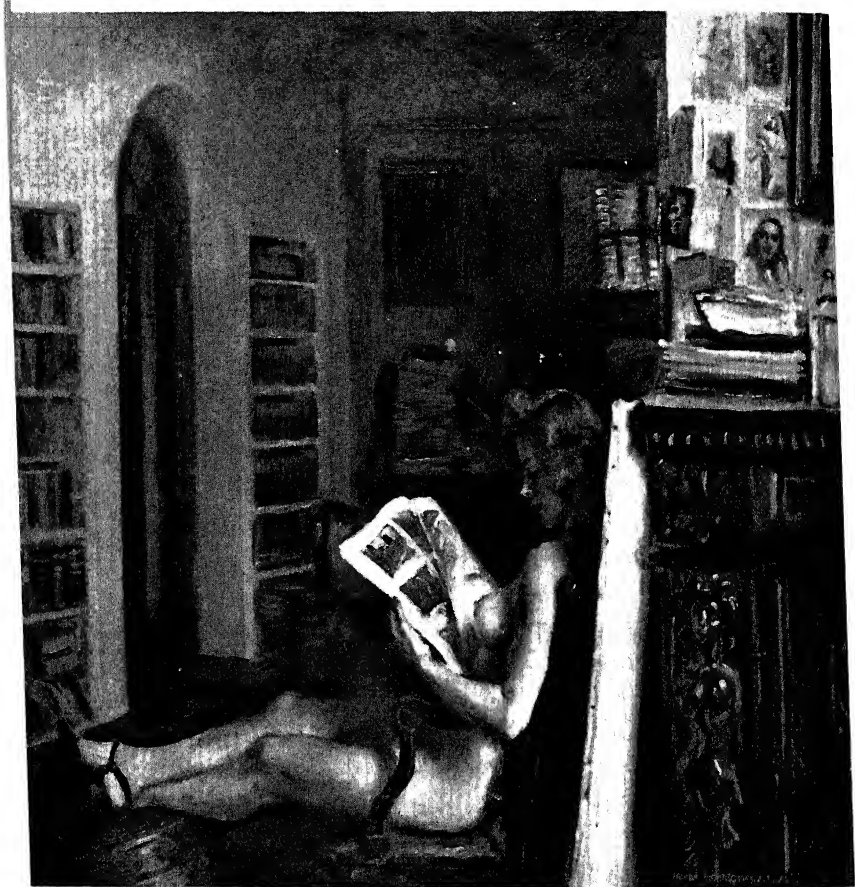
Encouraged by this I invented a character “Nervy Nat,” a Chesterfieldian tramp, and carried him through his adventures for four years on the back page of *Judge*. The great W. C.



The famous *Judge* character created by Flagg



"The American husband"



Corner in Flagg's studio. There is some still life
in it also

Fields, then unknown, could with only a slight accent of makeup have doubled for Nat. The great comedian in later years told me in Hollywood that he knew that and had often thought of it.

Nervy Nat did not appear in newspaper syndication, but in spite of that he became pretty well known and was used in movies and as a character in Broadway revues without my being consulted about it.

Another distinguished friend of mine was Professor Frederick Starr, at that time head of the Egyptology and anthropology divisions in the Natural History Museum. I spent hours after art school helping him unpack cases from Africa; pottery, idols, carved wooden gimcracks. I made careful pen-and-ink drawings of the pieces he wanted to illustrate for his articles in magazines. What's more, I got paid for my work.

Often as I worked with him, little gangs of kids from slums would pause at our alcove; curious about what we were unpacking. Starr would look up at them and chaff them in his kindly way. They smelt like burnt wet newspapers. The Professor, one day, was testing limestone with muriatic acid. One of the inquisitive children accidentally knocked the acid bottle off the table. Some of that poisonous stuff, that will eat into anything *but* limestone, splattered into one of my eyes. Rushing through the crowd, Starr grabbed me, ran me to a sink and splashed water into my eyes. Without pausing to get his hat he hustled me down the long flights of stone stairs out to a hack and to a doctor, who said the Professor had saved my eye and then he squirted belladonna into it. The Professor took me home and stayed for supper with us.

Professor Starr was a great world traveler. He was also among the first to show New Yorkers how to prepare and eat grapefruit; then practically unknown as a fruit in this country.

That was about fifty-five years ago.

In 1893 I went out to the Chicago World's Fair and stayed with the Professor and his sister. He was then presiding over the same 'ologies at the University of Chicago. We ate in the

University Commons with his students. Some evenings I would stay in with him at his apartment and listen to him and his assistant profs talk of their explorations and adventures. Other evenings I would go to the theater. I remember seeing Lillian Russell in *Giroflé-Girofla* and Julia Marlowe and Taber in *Othello*. I was on my own and hoped no one would imagine that I wasn't a man of the world. The only time I can ever remember being self-conscious was when I bought my first stick. It cost a dollar, and the brown stain came off in my palm. It was hot in Chicago that summer.

Like any soda-jerk or plumber's assistant I was exceedingly sex-conscious. It was a source of amazement later in my life that I had never got into trouble. I was shot with luck all my life—until I was forty.

For some reason I had no desire to see Little Egypt with her revolving navel. She was making a national furore on the Midway. But there was a fascination, a repulsion, in looking at the bulbous and grimy Persian female barker sitting at the entrance to the Persian building. Her heavy, blue-black eyebrows, her painted eyelids and wicked eyes gave me the shivers as she monotonously beat her drum-bum-de-bum-dum and called out:

"Have your for-r-tune told! A man never saw you, a man never met you—he tell your past, present and your futchor-r!"

St. Nicholas gave me a commission to write my impressions of the fair, for which they paid me \$15 for fifteen hundred words. My reporting was in a sarcastic vein in spite of all the thrills.

The three things I liked best were the late slanting-sun of afternoon on the Court of Honor; looking at the blue lake through the white columns of the Peristyle, and listening to the Washington Marine Band playing what they always play—"The American Patrol," "The Darkie's Dream," "The Mocking Bird" with variations and "William Tell" (which last today only makes me think of Mickey Mouse in the "Band Concert").

The band leader, a black-bearded, trim, eyeglassed man in

a white uniform, had his own ideas about conducting. He led his men with a stiff beat and a half and fired off a revolver at the psychological climax. For another effect he sent his four trombonists secretly up into the Administration Building overlooking the bandstand. Of a sudden from the tall windows of the third story the quartet of trombones would take a phrase in high gear that made strong men drool and women and children squeak. It "cut ice," as we said in the nineties. Every day he featured "After the Ball," the all-out hit of the year. It was parodied in variety shows in the following fashion:

*"After the Fair is over
What will Chicago do
With all of those funny buildings
Put up with shingles and glue?"*

The great fame of that band leader began at the Chicago World's Fair. His stirring marches came thundering out; set Young America's pulses pounding and their feet doing the two-step—an honest, healthy, bucolic dance which would bring a pitying smile to the grey faces of the present-day dancers who prefer the slow crotch-weaving congas and rhumbas. Soldiers marched to the lively male marches: "The Washington Post," "Liberty Bell," "Stars and Stripes Forever," "El Capitan," written by the King of Marches, John Philip Sousa. If angels have any red blood in them they are now joyously tramping in unison through and over the clouds beyond to his glorious "El Capitan"!

As I write of these joyful days I wonder if people who have the effrontery to record their life stories should take their cue from the aphorism on the sundials: "I only record the sunny hours!" Then I think, how could you or a sundial *record* sunny hours without shadows?

One evening I returned from the fair to the Professor's home and said to him:

"For several days a man looking very much like a toad has

followed me about the fair. It makes me uncomfortable. He half smiles. Why is that?"

(Me—sixteen-year-old man of the world!)

Starr: "There are some men who shouldn't be allowed to live. Tomorrow I will go out with you . . . we shall see."

The next day he came with me and carried a heavy stick. As we sauntered slowly with the crowd in the Court of Honor, my favorite haunt, suddenly there was the toad. Then he saw the powerful Professor and his heavy ashen stick. He must have smelt trouble. He disappeared and I saw him no more.

In the Victorian Era children had to learn about life from anyone except their parents, who were too refined to have good sense. If for no other reason I say, Damn Victoria and her rotten German progenitors! What a brood she hatched! But with Morris, Hunt, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Millais, Madox Brown and Ruskin, Victorianism began dying in its pious pantalettes!

And now the children of World War I parents have swung still further away from antimacassars and horsehair.

The mothers of today's youngsters bobbed their hair and cut off their skirts—which was a dreadful awakening to the male in many cases. Then they starved themselves. Their mothers had smashed their breasts with Boyish-form brassieres, trying to deny their femininity from the waist up and publicizing it from the waist down. It was a screwy era. Making love to a girl of that period was like trying to neck a week-end golf bag with five irons in it. They clanked!

Physically the current generation are a great improvement. This is the age of the Unfenced-in Buzoom. Even the underprivileged are helped out by the U.S. Rubber Company. At least for the casual bystander it's pleasant scenery.

But . . . the pendulum of life as of today is kicking pretty far over to the left. These kids' mothers were rated as carrying contraceptives in their handbags when they stepped out with the boys who carried pints in their hip pockets. But today I'm afeared they don't take that trouble.

I am not a reformer—that is a silly role—but I do observe. '

3. ADOLESCENTS

ABOUT TOWN

WHEN MY generation was as young as sixteen we wore stiff laundered duck "pants" (meaning "trousers") in the summer, and they wrinkled in one wearing like wrapping paper. They were the most absurdly impractical, ugly leg coverings. Our torsos were encased in stupidly long blue serge coats; above that, wide-brimmed, thick straw hats, and around our necks the most awful stiff three-and-a-half-inch collars; even when the Fahrenheit registered 90°. We sported a whangee stick and were careful not to refer to it as a "cane." Our high button boots had pen-point toes with which, in the humor of the nineties, you could kick a fly in the face. On hot nights when we didn't go to the theater, we would saunter up Riverside Drive and practice the sport of the adolescent; "picking up Chippies." The way sailors do. We were slumming and we instinctively realized it, but we didn't care. As I think of it we were very like the male pigeons who strut and prance around. The chippies, giggling little muckers, traveled in pairs as we did. Believing themselves "more deadly than the males." As my friend Julian Street (not Petey!) once remarked, "the female of the species is more diddly than the male!"

There was an engrossing excitement about this age-old game of juvenile conquest under the arc lights. The cheap, banal approach. The cheaper and sillier reply. The hackneyed old-young rules of the game. The sudden disappearances into

shadows of trees. The amateur kisses and fondlings. Your heart in your throat. The pride of manhood—that amoeba of passion. All of it completely forgotten an hour later.

“Did you?” one of you asks the other, later.

“No.”

Very lucky, probably!

In the middle nineties when my handsome cousin Stewart and I began feeling our oats we loved comic opera, and almost every night we haunted the theater. We generally took dollar admissions and stood up in the back or slipped an usher a quarter to find us a seat that was unclaimed. The first whack at air-conditioning was attempted at the old Herald Square Theater at the corner of 35th and Broadway. I think it was during the run of the *Three Twins* or perhaps Louis Mann in *The Girl from Paris*. In the space behind the orchestra seats they put an enormous cake of ice on a table and blew air over it with electric fans.

Hammerstein’s Olympia was the popular spot in summertime. It was a block-long building housing the New York Theater at the north end and the Criterion at the south. It had a giant bar in the middle and a roof garden on top. Roof Gardens! The apogee of summer night life.

Jack and the Beanstalk, *Little Christopher, Jr.* and other extravaganzas were the fashion. Stewart and I never missed any of them. Some of them we went to see over and over again. One night we were watching the incredible protean actor Fregoli doing twenty-two characters in his act when suddenly everything went black and I passed out on the floor. Manhattan cocktails were the drinks of the day. My cousin also became momentarily ill so we went on the wagon for a year and 36 days later hopped off. When I became twenty I again went on the wagon; for twenty years.

We were always amused by the dissipated leer of the comedian Frank Daniels, whose humorous croaks in *The Idol’s Eye* and *The Wizard of Nile* at the Casino delighted us. We also especially enjoyed DeWolf Hopper and Della Fox in *Wang*.

Hopper was always tops—some of you old-timers remember —“... the elephant ate all night—the elephant ate all day... and still the cry ‘More Hay!’” Della Fox was popular but to my way of thinking was unpleasantly tough in her men’s clothes. Nor did I like the nasty little spicurl on her forehead which was being copied by millions of women all over America. She posed lying on her hip on a table, smoking a cigarette, with her yachting cap cocked over one eye, singing “A Shady Nook—A Babbling Brook.”

At the old Broadway Theater comic opera was the fashion of the day. Descendant of *opéra comique* and *opéra bouffe* with an added touch of horseplay. But the most brilliant and wittiest of all were the Gilbert & Sullivan operettas. Musical comedy hadn’t yet reared its anemic head and pushed comic opera into Cain’s Warehouse.

As musical comedy matured, it became steadily sillier—especially the London brand from the Gaiety there. Chinless sissies and ugly English women prancing about in French cafés or English nurseries. I never saw one show that didn’t either have two grownups playing horsey with pink ribbons giddyapping around the nursery or some maudlin lyrics about the love affairs of a Chinese goldfish and a greenbottle fly or some such nonsense.

Even in my callow years I thought it stunk. Even today I’d rather see robustious Robin Hood with Henry Clay Barnabee singing, “I never have yet made one mistake—I’d like to for variety’s sake—I’m the Sheriff of Nottingham!” There was Frothingham as Friar Tuck gleefully pushing the live rat into the boiling caldron in the woods; Camille Darville as Maid Marian singing and tripping about with her pretty brown legs; MacDonald singing, “It takes nine tailors to make one man”; Eugene Cowles’s double-barreled bass in the Armorer’s Song, and Tom Carl as Robin Hood!

Some people said, quite unfairly it seemed to me, that DeKoven was such a young man to have written such old

music. As to the librettos for comic operas, there was no choice, as Harry B. Smith wrote them all.

Later on Harry B. offered a prize for a second verse to a song in his *For the Love of Mike*. I won the prize of fifty dollars and sneaked into a matinee and heard it. Since he had written all the lyrics of the day it gave me an extra kick to hear them sing my words.

Then Daly's Theater with Shakespeare's silly comedies claimed us at times. Honestly isn't the *Comedy of Errors* boringly naïve? And *As You Like It*? Really, come clean, is it comedy or just stuff for high school girls to put on for the delight of their doting parents?

Weber and Fields in their tiny theater were the big hit of the town. The place was jammed to the gunwales every night with the fashionable crowds laughing at and with Pete Daly, Ross and Fenton, May Irwin, as well as the "Dutch" comedians themselves. Adolescents-about-town like my cousin and I were accustomed to standing up in the theater; in the back or side aisles, wherever we could get. Once I held a beautiful lady's hand throughout the performance while leaning on the plush edge of her box. I didn't know who she was but she looked like Scheherazade to me. I passed her on the street later but she didn't recognize me. It was forty-five years later. She still had Arabian Nights eyes, but she didn't seem the same.

I knew every act of vaudeville from the Four Cohans to Bonnie Thornton and haunted every variety theater in New York as far up as 125th Street. In the Union Square Theater, Milton Aborn had a stock company playing comic operas and opéra comiques from *Pinafore* to the *Beggars' Opera*. All of them. When I was around fifteen, I frequently went to lunch with Horatio Alger, Jr., a dear little pink old gentleman from Natick, Mass. He'd always autograph his latest book and present it to me. I came in on some of his parties for Ragged Dicks and other Alger characters. He fed them ice cream and told them stories and they loved him. God! How they smelt! Burnt wet newspaper again.

Somehow I never did meet Guy Wetmore Carryl, who, I think, wrote *Davy and the Goblin*. Next to Alice in Wonderland, Davy was the character in fiction nearest to our hearts. Not to know Davy was almost like not knowing your Alice. It meant you didn't quite belong! Don't let anyone of our gang know that you haven't heard of "the Walloping Window-Blind." Not to mention the High Cockalorum and the coconut palm that was lowered on a hinge. Go right down to Brentano's and get a copy, ostensibly for your children but really for you! It is as priceless as *The Wind in the Willows* illustrated by Shepard, without whose inimitable drawings this book is to my mind utterly useless. As you read *The Wind in the Willows* aloud you have to grin and show the "Toad" and the "Mole" and "Badger" to your listeners, otherwise it doesn't come out right. If your family are not enthralled, you've unhappily got the wrong kind of family and I advise you to get rid of them, kindly but ruthlessly, and start all over again!

There are four children's books that are "musts." They are under the head of Children's Books but you know as well as I that—whisper!—they're all written for *us*! The four are: *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, *Davy and the Goblin*, *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Water Babies*. The last of course is illustrated by Lindley Sambourne. Otherwise it's counterfeit.

But I almost forgot the fifth book: Joel Chandler Harris' *Nights with Uncle Remus*. It's an American classic—but only with A. B. Frost's drawings. It is not the McCoy without them! How Frost could draw rabbits! A very great American artist who is known today only by *very* cultivated people I'm afraid. No artist who ever lived in any period of the world could draw such animals—animals with such humor and knowledge. When he was eighty he could draw as well as he did at thirty! Artists don't die . . . they blow up!

Oh, America! What a place for an artist to be born in. An artist here has to be a Fuller Brush man. We are at the mercy of a cockeyed Babbitt. *He's* our judge. God help us! Do you

realize that we artists are appraised, judged and kept alive by people who are beneath us spiritually, sensitively, and esthetically? How do they know? They don't.

"Monty was a nice boy till he went to the Art Students' League!" my mother used to say. This was a libel, for I doubt if I ever was nice. I didn't intend to be. Decades later I was reminded of this when I was taking my daughter Faith, then ten years old, for a drive. I happened to use a ribald four-letter word and she said: "Why, Monty! do you think that's nice?" I settled that right there and then by telling her that if she ever used the word "nice" in reference to me I'd turn her up and smack her on her pink bottom! I suppose her teachers were an antidote for her father, because she never took on any of her father's post-Victorian language.

When I was sixteen, not knowing any better, I submitted drawings for admission to the National Academy School. They turned me down. I wasn't drawing the way they taught.

At the Art League I had three chums. The term "pal" wasn't extant in those days. They were John Wolcott Adams and Walter Appleton Clark (both from Worcester, Mass., my dad's natal spot) and Arthur Mario Noakes-Acton, who was British.

Johnny was a snob, but like Ham Fisher's story of the hydrocephalic kid's head, "it looked good on him!" He was a handsome, lean, sardonic artist. We all kidded him about his yellow hair and his very black beard. He would go for days without shaving and in his sloppy clothes looked more or less like a tramp; but with an air! On some festal days he would appear in his one good suit—a very good one. His black stubble beard was scraped off, he would be wearing a wing collar, which he affected because he admired E. H. Sothern's collars, and looking exceedingly well groomed. Draped on his arm would be a beautiful out-of-town girl carrying armful of American Beauties. He knew, of course, he was knocking them cold all along the line and he naturally enjoyed it. He was very poor but never so poverty-stricken as to be without a pair of Oliver Moore's boots (we did not wear shoes in the nineties except

for sneakers at the seaside), and he had three-piece wooden trees for them and they set him back twenty-five dollars. Even when John had no idea where his next meal would come from he still had those beautiful boots. It was an obsession. He was like Beau Brummell in the last act. He and I went over again and again to see Richard Mansfield in Clyde Fitch's *Beau Brummell*. In the studio we shared we would at odd moments act out scenes from the play, alternating the parts of Brummell and the Beau's Gentleman's gentleman, Mortimer.

In later years Tom Wells of *Harper's*, John's brother-in-law, said that John if he had had money would have been the Brummell of his day. He had a passionate love of the line and a sure instinct for elegance. This highly developed sense of the elegant was all the more poignant and picturesque since it was almost submerged by his poverty.

His pride never let poverty get him down. He ignored it. John, an indomitable spirit, had a right to be proud; though he probably never thought of it that way. He'd turn what might have become another man's humiliation into a laugh. He could also laugh at himself. In fact he did so at his own funny wedding performed by a J.P. in Greenwich. When the Justice of the Peace got as far as "with all my wordly goods I thee endow," he was stopped cold by John's sudden sardonic laughter. John had had a few I think.

Though arrogant he was honest as sunlight. A New England pundit. There was no subject spoken of by man that John didn't know something about...and I mean *know*. It was not mechanical memory like those men with blotting-paper minds who remember the date when some dull baseball player made 403 runs in one game in Detroit on June 19, 1899, or some such uninspiring fact. His knowledge was intellectual. I suspect his distinguished mental faculties were largely owing to his not having gone to Harvard as his brother did!

As for Arthur Noakes-Acton, he was a handsome young English lad about a year and a half older than I and even then was God's gift to exiled Italian countesses in search of a lover.

When I wasn't with Johnny Adams or Walter Clark I was with Arturo. Noakes-Acton was looked on with more or less distrust by most of the large life class at the League—who foolishly nicknamed him "Lord 'Arry." He was as courteously aloof to them as they were intolerant of him. The class was largely made up of "Melting Pot" Americans if you know what I mean. In that respect I guess art classes are about the same today; with perhaps a dash more of Communists.

When a new member joined the class it was the custom for him to stand treat, providing at the lunch hour a lot of rye whiskey, ginger ale, sandwiches, cheese and olives for the boys. Then everyone took the day off, got a bit drunk and marched out into 57th Street in their smocks and paraded with "Joltin' Bones" (named after Bolton Jones the painter), an articulated skeleton whose home was in a glass case at the head of the stairs. This sort of childishness didn't interest Arturo nor me either. I liked the food and drink part but balked at the parading. Many times I used to go home with Arturo to lunch or to spend the week end at the home of his foster father, Henri Watson. Watson, always referred to by Arturo as "the Governor," was an elderly collector and dealer in antiques, mainly Italian Renaissance, and he welcomed me first as a pal of Arthur's and later, I was glad to realize, on my own account. Henri Watson and his way of living was of a character entirely new to me. He came from a New England farm originally. The man that I knew was as far removed from that origin as is possible to imagine. He was utterly cosmopolitan and Continental in his attitude and his mode of living. He knew everybody and had been everywhere. He was, from his Parisian-made clothes to his manners, always elegant.

His mustache was grey and waxed. He was always lapel-flowered. His manner was deprecating and subtly malicious, with a slight touch of preciosity and a hint of a lisp. An epicure, a gourmet, and a lover of beauty with impeccable taste. One thought of him at home anywhere—except on a farm! I saw him once without his collar on and I was rather shocked.

I had never thought of him as having a neck. Arthur, who always treated his "father" with affectionate insolence, was his pride and joy.

I once acquired a case of jaundice so markedly that when I was standing on the back platform of a horsecar in a crowd, a German looked at me searchingly and said:

"Vot iss der name of dot disease vot you haf got?"

I said: "None of your goddamned business!"

Well, Henri, when I was starting to recuperate, with his usual kindness, insisted that I needed a change and took me up to his house in Mosholu Park for a week. He wasn't there in the daytime, but he saw to it that I had quail for lunch and anything else I desired. The life of Reilly could have been patterned after that week of mine there. This house of Watson's was a strange and wonderful place to the ordinary suburbanite.

If visitors took up an illuminated book or a jeweled snuffbox to examine, Henri would invariably, on its being laid down, put it back with exactitude in the spot where he had originally arranged it. He managed to do this in such a way that visitors did not perceive this ritual.

Henri had amusing firsthand stories of many well-known people—especially about the Duveens, one of whom was raised to the British peerage. He told about the Duveen brothers' first arrival in New York by steerage. From steerage to peerage. They got off the boat and displayed a few cheap Italian knickknacks on a piece of carpet they had unrolled on the dock. Watson would also describe a family dinner in later years at one of the Duveens in London when Papa would greet his offspring after a prolonged absence and miscall several of their names as he patted their heads. I would bet that Duveen laughed at the situation himself, since Jews as a rule have a rare sense of their own funniness: unlike the Irish, who cannot take it.

In the first days of the Spanish-American War (cynically

called "Hearst's War") some of us youngsters went out to New Haven where the Yale Battery was encamped and were amused at the serious way these lads were taking their war training. We were particularly delighted by the youthful captain brushing his teeth over a pail held by a solemn classmate.

We even sampled the prune pies delivered to the Battery at noon, which looked and tasted like molasses-covered cockroaches between pieces of yellow blotting paper.

My cousin Stewart, a simple lad, went gaily into the war and served as gunner's mate on the U.S.S. *Yankee*. Some of the female Flaggs said, "Why don't *you* go to war?" I said: "Why should I? It doesn't interest me a little bit. I haven't the remotest interest in Spaniards or Cubans."

I watched with no particular emotion these noble young Americans marching sternly to war down Fifth Avenue to the tune of "Goodbye, Dolly Gray." Virile young men crave excitement and adventure the world over, and patriotism gives them a wonderful excuse to be heroes at the same time. In World War I, Daisy McCutcheon, the wife of George Barr McCutcheon, was resentful in her sweet way about my claim that it was mostly the desire for excitement that made youngsters enlist.

"Leave it to Bill," I said. Her son Bill Fay had just enlisted. I dared young Bill to be honest and tell us whether he had joined up mostly to Make the World Safe for Democracy or for the hell of it. He grinned and answered, "You said it! For the excitement—that's the truth!"

I believe that neither women nor noble ideals primarily influence men to go to war, but that they fight because men are fighting animals.

4. LONDON AND BUSHEY

I CLAIM THAT the sense of smell is the most powerful of all the senses; that a certain odor will flash a scene in the past back to you instantaneously.

There is the London smell. It is unforgettable, different from any other city. It's a nasal cocktail to me, the main ingredient being the wooden paving blocks. Then there's the smoke, the wet trees in the parks, the old smell of decay, the special perfume of the Burlington Arcade—provocative, an imported Parisian smell, giving you the expectant feeling of imminent excitement; romantic, sensual, a mysterious pleasure about to happen at the next corner; only it never happens. If it did it would indubitably turn into a stink! Still, there it is—the expectancy.

There was so much to love and so much to laugh at in London. For that reason it never bored me. Wherever in any and all directions the old horse-drawn busses could go, I went. After my morning eggs and Wilshire bacon I would get on top of a bus with my paints and be gone until dinnertime. Except for a spot of lunch off a marble table at an A.B.C., I spent my time searching for places to paint or at the theater. Oftimes I would join a queue at the matinee to see a musical show (*The Country Girl* or *Veronique* or *Miss Hook of Holland*) or a drawing-room comedy on Shaftsbury Avenue (*The Gay Lord Quex* or *The Admirable Crichton*).

It was fun to talk to chance seatmates on the busses. For the most part the men pretended to be startled and annoyed if spoken to and said, "Yes," and "Quite" and "Really?" But women often talked with me—nice ones, not tarts—which would have been impossible in New York. They saw at once I was an outlandish American and conversed in a kindly, interested way, as they might with a camel in the zoo.

I once called a young stenog's attention to a flea walking on her knee. I thought she ought to do something about it as I did not want it to become my flea. Perhaps she misunderstood my motives for she was furious at me.

I would come back in the late afternoon in time to have a family row over croquet in the back garden. Our game was played frequently to a distant accompaniment of the wonderful voice way over the garden walls on Brompton Road, of the masked lady; a mendicant singer accompanied by a hurdy-gurdy.

On cook's night off my sister Margaret proudly set before us a beautiful coconut layer cake she had made. But she had shaved the coconut with a knife that had shaved onions. The cake was given to the charwomen, who didn't in the least object to onion flavor in cake.

There were always so many things going on in London during the season, and half the time there would be no mention of them in the newspapers. You evidently are expected to know about such things intuitively. Dad always went through the same ritual when one of these jaunts like international polo at Ranelagh or the Henley Regatta or a horse show at the White City or tennis at Wimbledon or Queen's Club was suggested to him. He always said no. He insisted on being coaxed and wheedled. Then he'd go and have a grand time. Better than anybody.

My first trip to London I made with Richmond Kimbrough, a young Tennessean friend of mine at the Art League in New York. We had become fed up with drawing with stump and "Sauce Crayon" which was insisted upon at the League. Lured

by some reproductions in the *Studio* of students' drawings done with carpenter pencils at Hubert Herkomer's school in Bushey, Herts., Eng., we went over on the old *Germanic*, a lousy little White Star boat which later quietly sank at the dock in New York.

I was sorter engaged to the beautiful Nellie, but I had to pursue my craft. I had no money. I intended to be gone for a long time. Art at any rate came first—before women even.

"Kimmy" and I had the childish notion that we must go abroad to continue studying, so after a sad and emotional long-distance talk with my gal, here I was on my way to England—1898.

Some afternoons when I would be lying on my berth reading, rats would suddenly appear on the rafters above me, and I threw books at them.

Kimmy and I had the good luck to make friends with a charming English gentleman and his wife. He was a Mr. Livingstone, a Commissioner of London Streets, and he told us he had been treated beautifully by our countrymen on his tour in the States. There was, he said, no other course open to him but to be friendly to all Americans forevermore. It was a bit of great luck for us because he so sincerely meant it. His all-out kindness was thoroughly helpful to two young aliens. When we landed in Liverpool he was met by his wife and children, whom he affectionately greeted. We all bundled into a "growler." He took Kimmy and me with our luggage to a little inexpensive hotel off the Strand, the Arundel, and gave us avuncular advice: on cabs and tips and money; how to circumvent avaricious cabbies by calling the commissioner; how to direct *him* to settle with the Jehus and how to settle with the commissioner afterwards; always to address a gentleman when writing as "Esq." and a tradesman as "Mr."; that artists must always charge guineas and not pounds (which we later did but got paid in pounds nevertheless, and very few pounds at that). Mr. Livingstone gave us a standing invitation to Sunday dinner at his flat, and many a Sunday we came up

to London from Bushey to his roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Um... good. As we were Americans it was calmly assumed that we knew nothing about clothes. The English are so delightfully superior. So he introduced us to his own tailor, Tom Brown of Oxford (honestly that was his name) in Conduit Street, and to Herbert's, his hatter, in Bond Street. Afterwards Kimmy and I never were so crude as to come up to London except in our frock coats and topplers. Even barbers wore frock coats in those days. Years later I remember, when my dad was in London as the resident head of the American Express in England, the amusing sight of an electrician re-wiring his house in South Kensington. The electrician first took off his frock coat, folded it neatly, laid it compactly with his topper on the floor and disappeared down a hole he had sawed in the floor, with a handful of wires, in a small cloud of sawdust.

We took lodgings in the village of Bushey in an ancient cottage on the High Road whose floors were so wavy it was like walking on a wooden ocean. The front doorway was so low we always knocked our top hats off on our way out.

There were three in the family of Brutons where we lived who owned "Como"; renamed lately in honor of the Eytalian lake where Rose, the daughter, had met, loved, and lost her fiancé, a gentleman's gentleman. Poor overworked Rose, the slavey with escaping wisps of hair and a smut of soot on her long nose, did all the work as her dropsical ma sat all day by her fire with a screen around her. George, her brother, was a busy job-master. Their Hertfordshire pronunciation was hard to get used to, especially Rose's. She startled us when we asked what she could get us for desserts by saying, "Poison things." She thought she was saying "pies and things."

The evening Kimmy and I arrived in the village, we heard that the Herkomer was giving a reception to his students at "Lululaund." He had thus named the house he had built in affectionate imitation of some western U.S. railroad station as

a graceful tribute to his deceased wife, an American lady. She probably had many virtues, but the one that evidently impressed Hubert Herkomer most was her talent as a "charming hostess." He carved this tribute to her on her gravestone.

We went in the rain to Herkomer's reception and were turned away from the front door. We seemed to be the only students who were astonished to be classed with tradesmen (our social position in Bushey was unique) and shooed in the back door where we fell over stacked umbrellas and galoshes. We were presented to "the Great Man." He was a Bavarian Hebrew who looked like an unpleasant caricature of Sir Henry Irving, who in turn looked like a caricature of Dante. Herkomer had both the manner and appearance of an actor with a well-advanced case of jaundice. He gave the little old town of Bushey in Hertfordshire a treat every pleasant afternoon by driving around the streets in what we barbaric Americans used to call a "low-necked hack." He would smile royally over his flowing orange Windsor tie at the grateful villagers. The harmonic combination of his Chartreuse skin with the orange tie was not wasted on a village as Art-Conscious as Bushey, where the most prosaic contribution to Beauty was a beaten brass candlestick. He was the big shot of the town. He gave daily messages to his pupils on the bulletin board at the school; no matter whether he had anything to say or not. He remained pontifically seated behind a table as we were presented, waved a casual claw and said:

"So you are Americans. Life is short. Especially to Americans. So go along and look around!"

I had heard he was going on a trip to Italy, so I politely wished him success. He looked at me sardonically.

"I don't need success," he drawled. "I have all that. I'm going for my health!"

After a trip later to Potsdam, Herkomer posted a bulletin telling all that he had made a magnificent enamel portrait of the Kaiser and that he had corrected a raft of erroneous ideas the Kaiser had cherished about England.

When Herkomer's son Siegfried was married, a bulletin in his usual excellent taste was tacked up. It warned all students that those who had contributed to the school wedding present for his son were invited to the wedding reception!

I was highly amused a score of years later in Emil Fuch's *Reminiscences* to read how Fuch, who was very persona grata at Buckingham Palace, was making a drawing of the dead Queen Victoria's body lying in state, when Herkomer hustled in from Bushey and tried to bluff his way in to make a drawing of the same subject. Fuch had the pleasure of having Herkomer ejected.

The students at the school were a rather naïve lot of youngsters, and we, being fresh from the U.S.A., were astonished at the open pursuit of the male by the sex that Americans looked upon as divine quarry.

The handsome, golden-haired Gertrude Atherton was living in Bushey in a corrugated iron shack in the back garden of a Scotch family named Bogle. She was even then rated as top woman novelist in England and had a cold, ruthless brain behind her light blue eyes that were agleam with sardonic humor.

She was vain of her long, golden hair—as was justifiable—and would let it fall over her shoulders after a wash and wander about the garden puffing a cigarette in a funny metal holder slipped over her forefinger. She was delightfully shocking to her hostesses. She knew "everybody" and took us under her social wing in London amongst the literary nabobs, the artistic swells, and the merely rich.

We learned about London from 'er. Which proud but perturbed families had been left with curiously dark-skinned babies on the departure of certain visiting Indian potentates; and who the swell was who had threatened to leave a rainy week-end house party if his wife failed to find him a suitable partner for the Seventh Commandment Waltz.

On Boxing Day night, Kimmy and I were in town for the theater. Afterwards, strolling along Piccadilly, we bumped into

Mr. Livingstone and family. He took us aside and told us to go on home as we would no doubt get into trouble on that street on such a night!

We recounted this laughingly to Gertie Atherton. She told us Gladstone was called a Piccadilly prowler.

The only decoration in Gertrude's Corrugated Shooting Box in the Bogles' back garden in Bushey was a newspaper clipping about Cecil Rhodes with a rough cut of his likeness. He was the only man she confessed any romantic interest in, possibly as much on account of his reputation as a misogynist as because he was the embodiment of the British Empire. Rhodes's elderly sister was a card—a friend of Gertie's of course—keen, homely, mannishly dressed and entirely uninhibited. She sat on the back of her neck with her legs crossed, drinking highballs, waving her arms about as she talked. A social lioness and a grand old gal, she didn't give a damn for appearances. She spent forty pounds a year on her wardrobe—even though her brother owned half the Empire.

We went in to Lady Colin Campbell's a number of times. Lady Vera was still a beautiful woman, although her fingers were so crippled with rheumatism that she wore black lace mitts. Sir Vincent Gaillard, a romantic-looking nabob, who had been knighted for doing something about the Ottoman Empire, often stalked about the place with two slinky Borzois as silent and as soft-footed as himself.

Lady Vera gave a box party one night at the Alhambra Music Hall for Gertrude Atherton, who went with us even though she had just received a cable telling of her mother's death. Gertrude sat partly behind the box curtain as a gesture of daughterly piety. On the way out, Gelett Burgess, a leprechaun, stepped on Lady Vera's long satin train, which stopped the titled lady in her tracks. With the sudden agility of a black mouse Gelett got behind me; thereby becoming invisible so that I seemed to be the guilty party.

I was amused with Burgess when he was introduced. He

always hurried to say, "For God's sake, don't mention the Purple Cow."

Of course no one had thought of mentioning it. No one had heard of it over there until he told them. Spending so much of his life among the sun-kissed Californians did something to him. According to Gilbert White (who became apoplectic if he was introduced as Stewart Edward White's brother) Gelett used to give parties and kick dozens of tin pans down the stairs after his departing guests. We can't all be Galsworthys, whom I consider great in spite of Rebecca West meowing about his being old hat. George Doran told me once, on his return from foreign author-stalking, that he took Rebecca and Hugh Walpole to lunch at the Savoy, and Miss West's entire conversation was on the subject of sodomy.

The fashion at big receptions in London in 1898—may still be if it starts up again—was for guests to stop on the ground floor to eat and drink before going upstairs to greet their hostess. We used to wonder if any guest was ever realistic enough to make the servant cut into the Eiffel Tower of caviar or the Taj Mahal of fruit cake, eat his fill and not go upstairs at all. It came as a shock to us simple Yankee lads when we had whispered our names on request to the powdered flunkey at the top of the stairs to have him bawl them out loud to the crowd of snooty fashionables. We waited for his tag line—"On track 13!"

On nights that Kimmy and I came into town on a party we were always surprised to find we had missed the last train back to Bushey. We then went to the Hotel Cecil for the night. And what a crumby feeling putting on the wilted white tie and tails the next morning and traveling home in broad daylight unshaven!

Although I am fonder of the Savoy, it did not give you the swanky, elated feeling that you got from driving up to the Cecil in a jingling hansom over giant rubber mats; around the circular drive to stop with a jerk that made you bow over the

dashboard. There was something about a hansom. "Ask Dad—he knows."

The London-wise never had the glass window down in front of his face in a rainstorm. He opened his umbrella instead, especially on such hills as the Haymarket. If the horse slipped and fell he wasn't so likely to crash headlong through glass.

Neither Kimmy nor I went regularly to Herkomer's school as we were also busy making a living, donning our frock coats and topplers and hopping up to London to see magazine editors and book publishers. One of the pleasantest editors was Lord Frederic Hamilton of Astor's *Pall Mall Magazine*, who was actually cordial to whippersnappers, and offered his own gilt-crown-embossed cigarettes to us. A damn nice lord. He even bought drawings at better prices than usual. I used to get five pounds instead of the usual two and a half to three. He had amusing framed admonitions hanging on pillars and walls downstairs, like... "The Editor is invisible before twelve noon" and "Artists will please remember when making illustrations that frock coats are not worn in the country."

He was a gent in spite of being a lord—which is untrue about our one-time British Ambassador Lord Halifax! I'll tell you why later.

I disliked John Lane, the Bodley Head publisher, at sight. He insulted one through his silly monocle. He sneered at my drawings and at my being an American, but in a slick way so there wasn't quite enough excuse to sock him. I never before or since have met a sneering editor. They have their feelings well under control.

Kimbrough invented the two-color-on-buckram book-cover design and made an enormous hit with it in London. He got an order for one from Lane and delivered it. Lane sneered and refused to accept it. It was one of Kimmy's best; expert lettering and all. Kimmy was astonished by the brutish manner of the Lane heel and demanded his guinea for his work. Lane took a sovereign out of his pocket—that was a shilling less

than the guinea—and threw it on the floor. Kimmy told me he couldn't afford to be properly dignified so he picked it up.

We were vicariously avenged by Gertie, the literary dinosaur, who just happened to be tops at that period and was besieged by publishers. Lane had been her publisher (the lucky stiff) but she had quit him.

He was slaving to get her back on his list and he called to see her; argued and pleaded with tears of acquisitiveness, winding up his oratory by abandoning all dignity, crying:

"I will go down on my knees to you if you will come back."

She smiled down on him with that cold, wicked, blonde smile of hers and breathed:

"Get down, Lane—get down on your knees then."

He put both his knees on the carpet at her feet. She uncovered her white teeth at him:

"Very pretty, Lane," she said, "very touching. Now get up—and go drop yourself in the Thames."

So she remained with Sands & Company, who by the way became a publisher and friend of mine; so much so he always paid me the equivalent of twelve dollars and a half per drawing—but on delivery.

Young Kimbrough was more socially inclined than I, so I was alone most of the time. Many nights I would be awakened by the pounding of the brass knocker on the front door and it would be the village constable escorting Kimmy home from the Red Lion where he taught poker to a group of young Britishers who consistently paid their tuition to teacher.

He became so thick with the County families—who are snooty to Royalty—that he was actually the last person to shake goodbye to Lord (Bobs) Roberts when the General entrained for the Boer War.

He rushed in excitedly one afternoon and begged me to guess what:

"They are sayin' in London that I'm bein' kept by Lady Whoosis!"

I was properly astonished—and disgusted—asking him what his answer was to that scandal.

“My answer,” he grinned, “—I said, Hooray fo’ Tennessee.”

He asked me now and then if I thought he was losing his Southern accent.

“Not at all—you still talk like a coon,” I reassured him.

Kimbrough died of popularity. That was during the period when Americans happened to be popular over there. It runs in streaks. A year before, during our Spanish-American War, the uppah clarses in London sported little Spanish flags in their buttonholes and on their bosoms.

Poor Kimmy blew in on a Christmas house party in Hertfordshire and died of pneumonia during the festivities. My friend Dr. Shackleton was called in but through no fault of his own was too late; as was also the case when he was called years before to W. S. Gilbert, who was drowned near the same location while gallantly saving the life of a young woman.

Spending Christmas alone in a foreign land is doleful, as many an exile knows. A barrel of big American apples sent to me by my father for my stocking didn’t lighten the gloom.

I began to feel sorry for myself; then morbid; then sick. Not enough to go to bed for, but enough to look up my friend Lester Ralph in London. He was an artist and a son of Julian Ralph, the famous war correspondent. Lester dropped what he was doing and took me on an endless bus ride through the rain to his doctor’s. So I got the old English stand-by, Elliman’s Embrocation, to rub on my chest and a bottle of something or other, called “*The Prescription*” on the label of a London Chymist’s bottle. I used to lie awake all night having the horrors about life after death which I traced to my having been dosed with metaphysics and Theosophy in my late teens.

That was why nearly thirty years later I could sympathize with Greta Garbo when we compared mental experiences.

In 1898 there were erotic bookshops just off the Strand whose windows of pornography were a horrid though tentative lure to me in my morbid state. I had no one to compare notes

with, so Boccaccio and Balzac and his *Droll Stories*, and others I have forgotten the names of, fascinated my youthful emotions. My Puritan blood, which I have always abominated as the lymph of hypocrisy, must have driven me, to my subsequent amusement, to get rid of these books. They were vitiating my taste for other literature, so I realized something must be done about it.

I took three volumes under my arm and walked through the lanes of Bushey, selected a lonely spot and threw them over the hedge and returned to my "digs."

Then over the shilling-a-scuttle fire in my living room, that cold grey afternoon, my absurd Puritanical conscience reared its gaunt head again. Again I went out, retracing my walk between the hedges; found the spot where I had thrown my wicked books; climbed over the hedge and got them back. It may be difficult to believe, but it's true, that I was worried about the deleterious effect Boccaccio might have on some innocent plowboy. So then I tried to burn the books in my grate. The ancient English grates are mean and the books smoldered for hours until I took them out and tore them apart. Then they flamed back to hell. I was free. For the time being.

After that ceremony my taste in reading became more varied. Being a frivolous person I do not read to improve my mind but always for entertainment. At twelve I had read all of the English novelists; all of Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Reade, Bulwer-Lytton, Austen, Lever. And all American novelists and some French; in English translation. I lived in novels. I still do. I loved to illustrate novels as life seemed more alive in them than it does in reality.

In January, 1899, I decided to go home. On my return trip on the *St. Louis*, I lost my nerve for oceans. We were hit by a tidal wave one day out of Southampton and turned completely about back toward England. The wave came as such a surprise, although it had been fairly rough, that a little man next to me asleep in his deck chair was catapulted. In a wall of white water down to the lee scuppers. He was slidin^g over the rail

(the top rail of the top deck) which at the moment was below sea level with his chair and rug when I grabbed him. I had to carry him down to his cabin as his legs were too cut up to walk.

"Oh, my poor wife and children," he kept moaning. Stewardesses and young boys were down on their knees in the water that rushed through the companionways, praying like crazy among the flying buckets. Four sailors were washed overboard, and they had to lash the captain to the bridge for the night. The slumgullion being swung up to the sailors was washed overboard. It was too rough for racks on the tables, and four of us who missed no meals—out of eighty cabin passengers—held our plates in our hands. I have never been seasick in all my thirty-six Atlantic crossings, but I came near it when I tried to drink warm salt water out of an ice cooler. A wave had splashed into the cooler.

When I got to my cabin my overcoat was floating in water up to my knees, and later when I hung it on a hook on my door it pendulumed horizontally across the door. We were only a day late arriving in New York, looking like Admiral Peary's flagship—one mass of ice.

My parents were on the wharf waiting for me.

"You nearly lost your little boy," I yelled up to them.

I hadn't been scared at the time; just astonished, excited and wet, but later on shore I got the blue jitters and I've been afraid of water ever since.

Drowning became the death I was least fondest of. I suppose I should have been reassured as was Betsy Trotwood in David Copperfield who bought a caul from a sailor and "died triumphantly in her bed." I too was born with a caul—or veil as it's sometimes called—and that is said positively to assure the owner that he or she will not drown. A caul also bestows second sight. My father has kept my caul to this day. It looks like a small handful of crumpled cellophane. Funny, huh?

5. NELLIE, ST. LOUIS, NEW
YORK, BUSHEY, PARIS, AND
FIRENZE AT ARTHUR
ACTON'S

ON MY return I went out to St. Louis to do the silliest thing an artist can do—get married. It was 24° below zero out there, but I was suffering from a bad case of love which made me immune to the temperature. I had fallen in love with Nellie McCormick the summer I was nineteen. On my vacation up at Biddeford Pool, Maine, I saw a profile on a piazza which thrilled me. That was the girl I had been trying to put on paper. She was my idea of Beauty!

Maybe you can understand what that meant to me, an artist, to see in reality the features that had been haunting my mind. There she was—come true.

Of course I met her. And time away from her was wasted; a blank. I did not know she was older than I. I never thought of such a thing until some of her girl friends, whom I had met before the beautiful one arrived, hastened to tell me everything they could think of against her. Typical girl friends. The main gripe seemed to be that Nellie was one of the belles of St. Louis.

All this talk meant nothing to me. I saw only one thing—the girl I wanted to marry. My family was staying at the old boardinghouse (the only place to stay unless you had a cottage), and I hurried through my supper and up over the hill to see Nellie with a sarcastic jibe from my mother ringing in my ear: "That's it. Go see your mammy!"

I was always welcomed in a heart-warming fashion by the McCormicks. It was only indirectly that I later heard that they were opposed to their daughter marrying a young man eleven years her junior. They were of course right, but being civilized people they never hurt my feelings as did my mother with her bitter sarcasm.

My father had the common sense and the affection that counts, not to plague me with advice and criticisms. He recognized me as a man responsible for my own mistakes. That's why I love him, Elisha Flagg—none finer—bottoms up!

The disapproval of both our families was decently camouflaged for the wedding with geniality and the traditional humor. Nellie's smart friends wine and dined us in the usual round of prenuptial entertainment. At these dinner parties when the time came for the ladies to retire to the drawing room I was pretty bored. In the first place I didn't want Nellie out of my sight—and it was that bad. And the other fly in the Chartreuse was having to sit there listening to the dull chatter of businessmen about people I did not know about; polo and golf and squash and binges. The situation was inevitable since I was a stranger and quite a bit younger than any of these rich sophisticates. I was relieved when it was time to take Nellie home and go on to my little hotel.

On *The Day* I had to get out of this little hotel by the fire escape to go to my own wedding because it had suddenly been quarantined on account of a case of smallpox or something. (In the light of later events maybe I should have let myself be quarantined.) When I think back on that evening wedding it seems like a chapter from one of Booth Tarkington's Indianapolis wedding scenes with its scalloped oysters, guests and cousins from under flat stones.

St. Louis is by way of being snooty about Chicago, but went to Chi for its wedding gowns. St. Louisans are the most consistent world travelers and have, or had, a really cultivated society. It is a charming city—if you know the right people. I was spoken of in the accounts of our wedding in the *Post-*

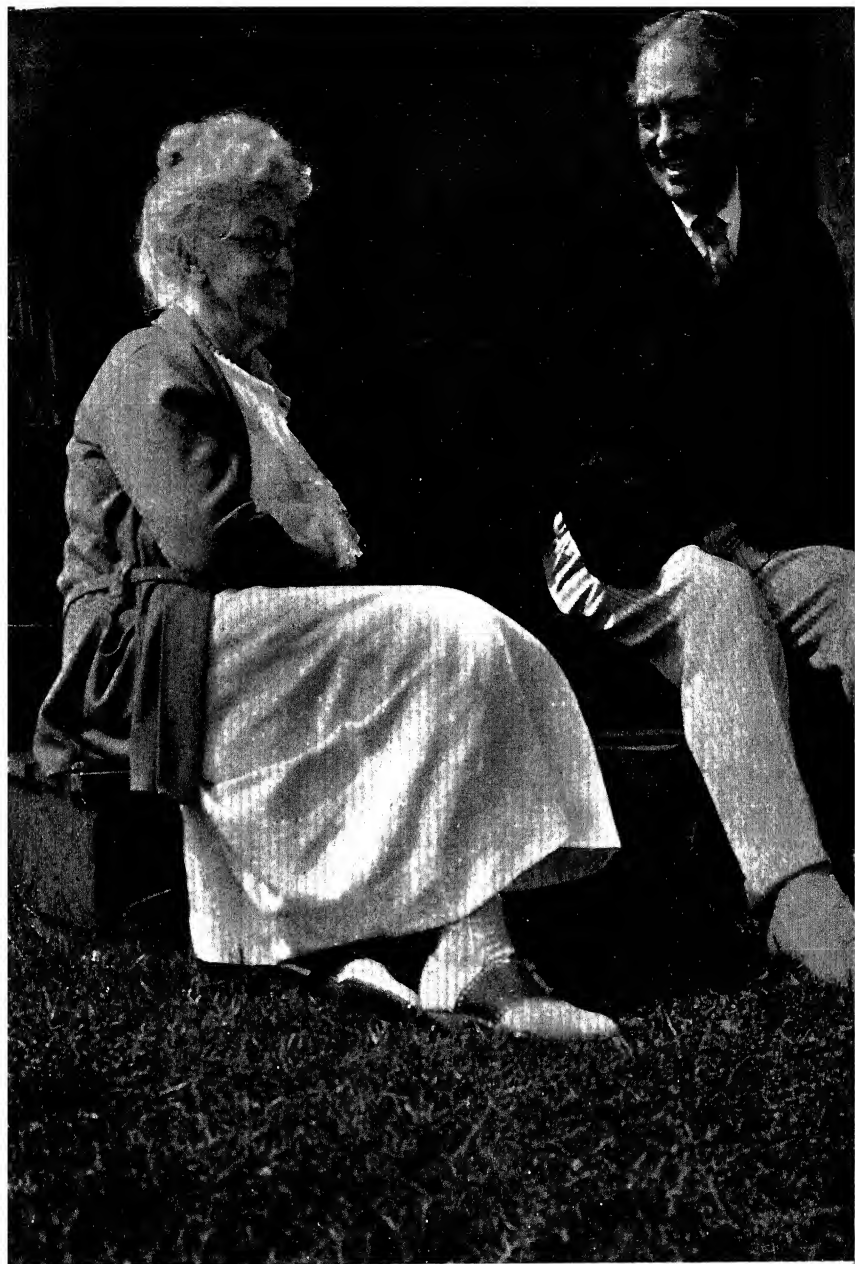
Dispatch as a "wealthy Easterner," which made everybody laugh—including me.

Nellie was a St. Louis socialite and knew all the richest people in all the big cities; up to then a realm of society entirely beyond my knowledge. In the early days of our marriage when I was short of cash she put her allowance at my disposal in an utterly generous and unselfish way. Be it recorded, however, for my pride's sake that this situation didn't last too long. In fact there is no period in my life when I could have been classified "an indigent artist."

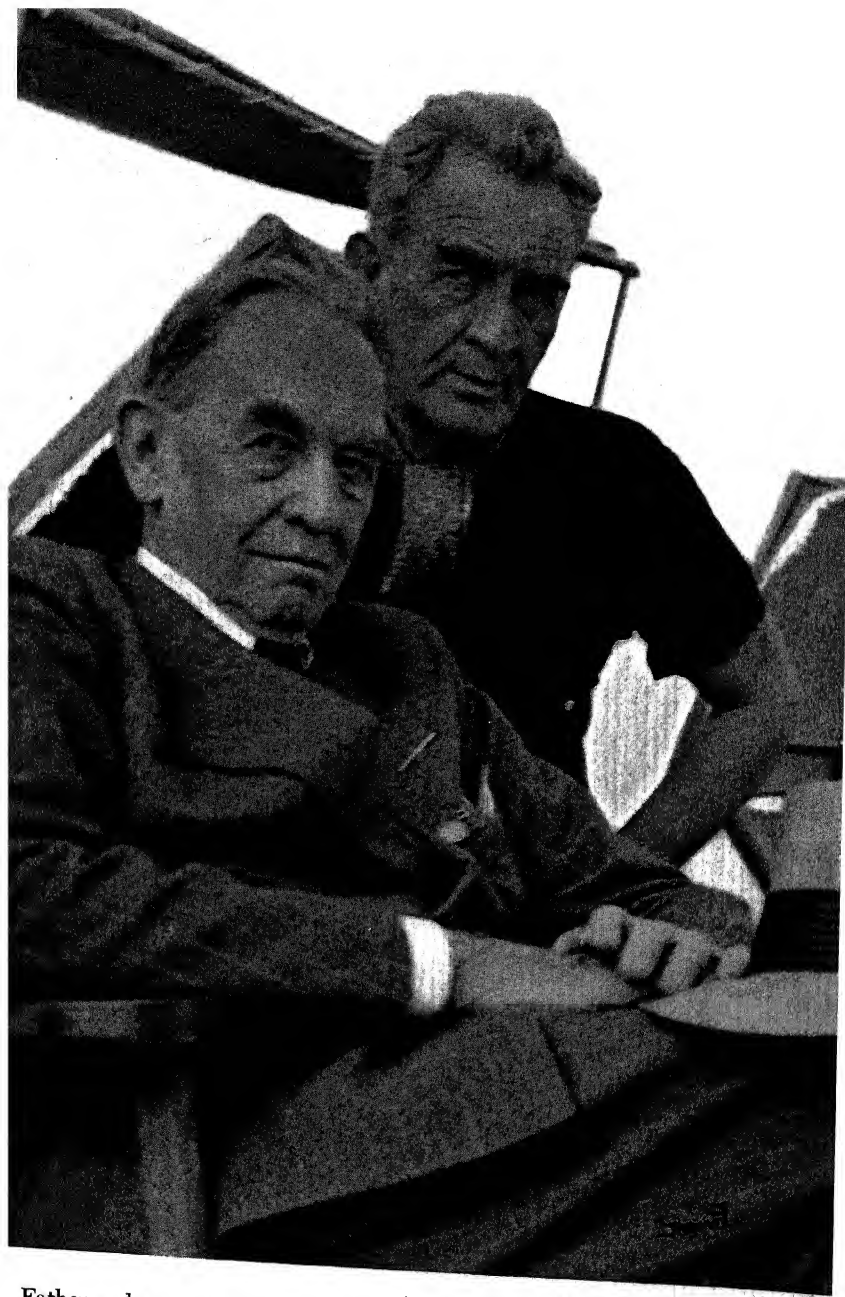
In the light of later experience I can evaluate these early days with Nellie more clearly. Here was this beautiful woman who had turned down a number of rich suitors to marry a poor but promising young artist who was madly in love with her. I don't feel any blame attaches itself to either of us for what happened after. It was inevitable. In spite of my being twenty-one and she thirty-two, neither of us knew much. For instance, one day while we were still engaged, we were talking, taking stock of ourselves, and I told her—I *warned* her—that I was a sensual man; but looking back I now realize that the dear didn't know what I was talking about. Young people in the nineties were such goofs. They had such tragic ignorance. The foul cobwebs of Victoria still clung, woven about them by their parents; and in such a nice way.

The first attraction between the sexes must necessarily be, sex, as R. L. S. says so truly in *Virginibus Puerisque*.

How was I to know that beautiful Nellie, voluptuous and sweet to look upon, was physically frigid? Years elapsed before I even heard the word mentioned. Yet all these years how it had mattered to me! Our emotional understanding was zero. Passion was not in her dictionary. It was in mine—in caps. Polite acquiescence in a woman is no substitute for physical passion, as many a man through the ages has found out, with different results—but with results. You push it down *here*—and it pops up *there*. Captains of our souls? Good God... we're lucky if we're the stewards.



Flagg's mother and father



Father and son at Montauk, Long Island

In spite of the absurd discrepancy in our ages and the futile opposition of our families; in spite of discovering I had married a woman who was more of a mother to me than the actual mother who bore me; in spite of the fact that my nature demanded more than she had to give, Nellie is still to me the finest woman I ever knew. She helped me unselfishly through those first years of finding myself. She had beauty, great beauty, taste, and was a gentlewoman.

After our marriage we went to New York and stayed a day at the Murray Hill Hotel before we sailed to England. Johnny Adams came to call as soon as we arrived in New York and took an instant shine to Nellie. She was so lovely just to look at, and more important than that in Johnny's mind, she "belonged"—his *sine qua non* of praise. As for Nellie, I even began to be a bit jealous on account of her enthusiasm for John.

I had an unfinished job of illustration to do for a London publisher, so back we went to Bushey and to my old digs. The Bushey females called on Nell and noting that she wore much shorter skirts than prevailed in England they labeled her "fearfully American!" We had to return a call made by Mrs. Bridge-water.

Previous to this visit I had warned Nellie not to get mixed up and call her Mrs. Bilgewater. So when the Lady came forward to greet us in her drawing room I unconsciously said with a pleasant smile—"Mrs. Bilgewater, I presume?" That tore it. Nellie heard me and when we escaped, hung on the gate in spasms of helpless laughter.

At this time my father and mother were also living in London. Formerly Dad had been a manufacturer of patent buttons and machines for putting them on, which he had invented. The company was doing so well his older competitors edged him out on a limb and then sawed it off. So my uncle Francis, who as vice-president of the American Express Company was number one man there, made Dad the manager for all England. In the ten years he was in London, Dad did a very successful job and became an Anglophile.

He had a unique position in London. So many Americans, great and small, visiting England came to him for assistance of some sort that he soon became known as "the second ambassador."

To show how important the American Express was to the English railways, when Uncle Francis came over with his wife, four daughters, and a servant, Dad was able to wangle the King of England's private car with all the trimmings, including the stewards, to meet my uncle and family at Liverpool and whisk them luxuriously over the rails to Euston station. Uncle Francis was somewhat astonished, for he hadn't known of the arrangements. Moreover, it was *some* car!

Eventually my uncle's increasing ill health brought a change in his situation with the company. Dad was transferred back to New York as manager of equipment and supplies for the following ten years. At my uncle's death Dad was forced to resign. I had already been supporting two aunts, and this automatically gave me two more. For many years thereafter I had in all eight relatives on the payroll. As I told Dad, I was Sucker Number One of the whole damn family, though I didn't mind much, for I was making \$75,000 a year. And luckily for all concerned I was not a splurger.

In the fall of '99 I went to Paris with Nellie so I could study there. My father and mother came over with us and stayed in Paris for ten days before they sailed home.

Paris is a beautiful city. I have lived there and I recognize its charm, but I have never really liked it. Vienna is much more beautiful.

We took rooms at Mme. Bellot's boardinghouse; fondly called a "*pension*" by Americans. It was in the Etoile, for I had no yearning for the Bohemian Left Bank with its Hemingway crap. Except in winter the "sun also rises" near the Arc, and without such a bleary eye.

This Mme. Bellot had for a companion one of those sallow old French women who ate her meals with the guests. Her racket was to give French lessons and tell the Madame what

the Americans said about the joint. I got tired of the food after a month and became vocally critical, on one occasion explaining to my fellow countrymen and women that the reason the grain in the slices of tough beef ran diagonally was because of the strain on the horses as they pulled the Porte Maillot busses up hill. The next morning early a note was handed in with our croissants and chocolate by the pretty *femme de chambre*. It was from the Madame and said our room was rented and that we were to vacate by noon. It was a relief since we wanted to move anyway, but the manner of eviction burned me up and I was mad, really mad. I am ashamed to say I broke up a plum cake and threw it all over the room.

That summer in St. Enogat on the Breton coast I met and was immediately adopted by Viteau Paul, novelist, editor, and critic with a shovel beard, a brown corduroy beret as big as a pillow case, and a big flapping cape.

I didn't care to learn much French; I absorbed a minimum of words and phrases—just enough to make fearful puns which would make dear old Viteau lay his finger along his nose and growl, "Shocking!" He in turn knew a few English phrases—like "times is money" and "beeznuss is beeznuss!" When he wanted to say something to me he would wag his finger at my wife and say with impressment: "*Dites à Flazgsh—*" He always carefully introduced Nellie as my "*femme légitime*." He knew artists.

We took coffee with Viteau and Josephine every afternoon in their garden. Josephine was his *femme légitime* and this was their belated, middle-aged honeymoon. The stout, black-haired Josephine was a Jewess and an opera singer who had been engaged to Viteau for seventeen years because he had foolishly promised his Catholic mother on her deathbed that he would not marry Josephine while his mother lived. Well, it seems that it wasn't a deathbed after all; just a sickbed. His mother promptly recuperated and went on to live her bigoted life for seventeen long years. Hence, these more than middle-aged

lovers had just been married when I met them. In the salon after dinner if anyone talked when Josephine sang, Viteau would tiptoe over and fiercely hush them.

Through him I got a number of commissions for water-color portraits in Paris. One of them was of Mme. Charles, the *première danseuse* of the Opéra Comique. She posed in ballet costume in the Salle des Danses with one foot up in the air. I completed my portrait of her and she liked it. I waited. No check came. So at length I wrote and reminded her. Madame was not only astounded, she was damn desolated. Such effrontery on my part. Degas and lots of the other boys had been only too happy to paint her and present her with their pictures. But *alors!* And who the bloody *enfer* did I think I was after all? She protested that it was "a normal interchange between artists." She had given me the "freshness of her costume" for God's sake, and I gave her—the water color. By the knotted calves and the broken arches of Terpsichore, can you beat it?

I told my troubles to a couple of young assistants to the Administrator. They first looked wide-eyed at me, and then helplessly at each other, nodded sagely, then one said to me:

"*Bien alors!* You got nossing?"

"Madame Charles is a serious woman," the other added. "She has lived with one man for sixteen years and has borne him children!"

"As to that," I muttered indignantly, "I wouldn't move over on a chaise longue for her."

I got paid when I painted several water-color portraits of the Directeur's dear friend. M. Duret, the *directeur* of the Opéra Comique, was a runt but he must have had something. Otherwise he couldn't have rated this gorgeous, seductive female who was a head taller than he was. Her name was Gilda Darty, and later she became his wife after he had divorced his first attempt. ("A man who marries a second time doesn't deserve to lose his first wife.") My first portrait of this handsome creature was in her sables. This made a hit with little Duret, so I went on painting several more; with less and

less clothes on. I would wait in Duret's office with a full-length mirror for her to keep the appointments for her sittings. He paced his small office impatiently; waiting for her he would swing his key chain and curse her with appalling names like "*pou volante*" and "*sale rosse*." But the moment she arrived in her furs and violets Duret would deflate into a state of idolatry, mumbling "*Ma femme!*" I don't know what became of him, but the seductive Gilda's fame as an actress finally brought her to stardom in New York.

That same year Nellie and I waited to see the World's Fair in Paris, which spread out for kilometers in all directions from its glittering core, as well as the exhibit of my painting in the Salon of 1900. I was told that it had been accepted because of the influence of the kindly M. Henner. You may perhaps recall his many red-haired Magdalens with the ivory flesh, sitting on greenswards against a deep blue background, and perhaps have wondered at the curious parallel between the name of Henner and the beautiful ladies of the "henna" color hair he painted.

Having a painting hung in the world-famous Paris Salon seemed to a simple American youth to be proof that the painter had actually arrived as a painter. That was the fatuous bunk! Brimming over with self-satisfaction, I took my wife under one arm and my painting under the other and sailed for home. I found shortly that I, as a painter, smelled to the stratosphere. On my arrival in Manhattan my friend Walter Appleton Clark took one look at my paintings, shook his head sadly and said: "You damned fool. You should have stayed over there and learned to paint."

The things you would have done differently—or not at all—if you had another chance! Or would you? All horribly disturbing thoughts. You know as well as I do.

On our return to America, Nellie and I did not feel like "settling down," a phrase as depressing as the act itself. So we bounced about the country, having a happy time being wast-

rels; at fashionable resorts from California to Florida; meeting Nellie's lighthearted and lightheaded rich friends wherever we drifted. All of this interval served me later as knowledge I needed in illustrating. That seeming idleness of mine was in truth actual research; in spite of its not being deliberate and in spite of its being pleasant.

Largely with the help of Nellie's allowance, we wandered for about four years: Santa Barbara, Palm Beach, "The Hot" in Virginia, here, there, back to Europe again in the summers—using my father's London house as a *pied-à-terre* to hop from on trips to the Continent. But all this travel was part of the Education of Jimmy Flagg. I began to realize that it is not the American husband who wants to travel. It is just that he is easily led.

On one occasion when I accompanied Nellie to St. Sulpice in Paris, intending no insult whatever, I unobtrusively settled way down in a deep pew quietly reading the *Paris Herald*. But some devout eye discovered me and I was ushered out into the street.

The ecclesiastical shows in Catholic churches have always bored me. It made me smile to see them sprinkling water out of what looked to me like dumbbells as they swayed down aisles in golden robes looking like nightgowns.

There is little doubt that the Catholics have the most spectacular ceremonies, but all the others give amusing religious pageants; each in their own way from Jews to Tibetans, according to their faith.

I find that people who demand tolerance rarely give it. No matter how they protest and smile—if you catch any kind of "believer" off guard he will admit that his religious practices alone are the real McCoy. The Brotherhood of Man is a beautiful ideal but it isn't a fact yet.

The loose-lipped Mortimer Snerds who used to call this rotating clinker "the best of all possible worlds" haven't been around much in the universe. Still this life of mine has been so damned interesting I wouldn't have missed it.

Back in New York again, I leased a studio apartment in 67th Street at my wife's urging but with misgivings as to my being able to pay the rent. Most of the artists in the new building bought their studios, but even if I had had the cash I thought it was a widows-and-orphans' investment and subject to sudden assessments. Besides I was leary of the validity of a deed to such property; bounded on four sides by the four winds, on the top by God and the bottom by the janitor. So I preferred to pay rent.

I hadn't actually made any plans. I just kept on making illustrations. To be reproduced in *Scribner's* was the same thing to a young illustrator as being hung in the Paris Salon was to a painter. It meant you had arrived. So I had persisted in showing my wares to dear old Joe Chapin, the art editor, who kept saying, "Let me see some more six months from now," until one day, to get rid of me, he said:

"Would you care to try to illustrate a hoodoo story? It has been illustrated three times and scheduled twice."

I said, "Sho nuff!"

So I did the job. It was satisfactory and I was set from then on. Joe Chapin, because of his friendly ways, his natural dignity and a thorough knowledge of his profession, was the beau ideal of art editors to us artists. Later on I became very fond of "Pop" Gibson, art editor of the *Cosmopolitan*, whose fierce truculence awed some of the younger artists. But so far as I was concerned his manner was only a subject of open derision between us, and we had lots of phony battles; cussing each other out, which signified nothing at all but a bit of vocal sparring. Instead of saying goodbye at the end of a phone conversation he invariably ended with a Bronx cheer. We had fun.

During depressions sometimes long-haired easel artists who were hard up would put gilt frames on their paintings, come to Pop and tell him they would be "willing" to make illustrations for him. They would indicate that they thought they were more or less slumming. I wish I could have been there

when Pop Gibson wound up and told them where they got off and where they could go after they got off and why it was highly improbable that they could make an acceptable illustration since that was an art they knew nothing about. . . .

In the back of my mind I kept the thought that Tudor Jenks had impressed on me once by calling portraiture "the aristocracy of art." But I had occasions to observe the shameful ambushes of painters who were called "society portrait painters." It was nauseating to watch their venal plans and traps and downright bootlicking, their insincere flattery, their cringing compliances to the vulgar rich and to stupid dowagers (a silly word meaning "rich *old* women") whom they inveigled into sittings for 50 x 60 canvases, ugly old mammas—most of them harriidans—sitting down strutting in ropes of pearls and diamonds and expensive wrappings. These painters did as they were told, making ill-natured jezebels with three tiers of chins, Alderny dewlaps, skin you wouldn't love to touch, bleary popeyes, drum waists, liver-spotted claws made uglier with jewels, wrists a chambermaid would hide, stomachs compressed hydraulically—making these obscene old creatures into unbelievable young women; achieving thereby a ghastly travesty on comeliness only excelled by the art of Frank Campbell's Funeral Parlors. What price portrait painters?

Nellie and I decided one summer to go to Italy and get a mess of cinquecento furniture for our first, and last, apartment together. What led up to that desire dated back to my friendship at the Art League with Arthur Mario Noakes-Acton.

If I had known that the lousy little Hamburg-American liner *Prinz Oscar* was only five thousand tons I would not have sailed on it. The captain of this cockleshell had a long brown beard which he continually combed with the Chinaman-long nails of his little fingers. He also had thirty odd cages of canaries on the deck of his quarters. He was slightly balmy, I suspect.

We went to the usual places and Nellie was *que-bellissima*ed

and had her bottom pinched in the traditional manner on the streets of Rome, and we enjoyed the wonderful cooking and wild strawberries at the Albergo Reale, which was much more important to us than the Coliseum and the Vatican.

Because of father's connections with the American Express, I had written him for tickets through Italy telling him to try to get something better than first class. I explained that I had traveled in Europe a good deal and found that traveling first class was sometimes a mockery if third class was full up, because the overflow was pushed right into the first-class carriages. Two or three ripe peasants sitting in your lap wasn't engaging on a long hot trip. Curiously enough this sort of thing didn't happen in democracies.

When we at last reached Florence, Acton met us and bundled us and our baggage into his Fiat, entrance by rear door in those days, and drove us at a reckless speed through the narrow streets up to Fiesole and his villa. The villa was easily the showplace of Florence and had eighty rooms with a great circular stone staircase in the middle. The magnificence of the place was overwhelming, as was also Arthur's sparkling hospitality. Hortense, his wife, was away at the time in America, which satisfied me since I hadn't met her and I liked having Arthur to myself. The most enjoyable part of our visit with Arthur was before his wife returned from a trip to Chicago where she had gone possibly to get recharged with Midwestern culture at the fountainhead. His two baby sons were there with a buxom wet nurse for the newest one. His brother-in-law Guy was around too, but we saw him only at meals. Arthur laughingly told us that Guy, on the eve of Arthur's marriage, had cautioned him in French, saying, "If you're going to deceive her, do it discreetly!"

Arthur had bought a smaller but equally beautiful villa for "the Governor," Henri Watson, who was coming over later in the summer.

Arthur was the son of Baron Acton and was quarter Italian, but the strain was completely suffocated by the three-quarters

British corpuscles; so decidedly suffocated that although he painted portraits, and a fine painter he was, and engaged in selling Italian antiques with Henri, he was at great pains to keep the facts hidden from Florence society.

He was an authority on Renaissance and the periods before that. When Stanford White came to Italy, Arthur traveled with him, and was his guide and bargainer for whatever White wanted to buy from a palace ceiling to a church seat.

Arthur had started in his early youth to become a priest but later, despite his obvious equipment for the profession, decided that he could enjoy the fleshpots without buttoning his collar in the back and gave up the whole idea.

If the Governor bragged about Arthur's ability to speak five languages Arthur would say, "Why bring that up? Any courier on the Continent can do that, Governor!"

Arturo Mario took in his stride, and he was a big man, the eagerness of lovely Florentine ladies to slip him their garden door keys. The rich Hortense Mitchell, who was beautiful but Chicago, married him and bought him the Villa Incontri. Originally the villa was called La Pietra—which was its old Roman name. Such gardens, such peristyles and fountains and statuary!

Arthur had exquisite taste. He was a vital and therefore a didactic bastard. (This word can be used in three ways: as an affectionate noun; as an insult; or as a legal description. I use it now as a term of affection although he claimed he was actually a by-blow.) This *bon goût* of his at times became eccentric; as in the case of his allowing no mirrors in the house with the exception of one to shave by. He claimed it was a vulgarity to have mirrors around repeating portions of a room—or of the people in it. He also felt it was a middle-class crudity to display china in glass-doored cabinets in dining rooms. China, he said, should be kept in the pantry like toothbrushes should be kept in bathrooms! He wouldn't have Dresden china, for he hated the silly rosebuds and forget-me-nots and garlands. He ate crawfish every day.

He took me down to his kitchen where his superb chef and

the chef's stooges cooked everything on a row of charcoal-filled bowls which was kept alight by constant swishings of a palm-leaf fan. Arthur was an adept in the art of living. A rich and handsome wife did not cramp his style at all. They used to say a man who marries a rich woman earns every cent he gets. Arthur wasn't the meek type. He was an artist, a painter of talent, a bon vivant, a wit, and a scholar, handsome, gay and whimsical. Conventions were a cause of hilarity to him and he had few inhibitions.

There were some drawbacks in the midst of all this elegance. There was nothing to hang our clothes on in this medieval castle as the armoires had only shelves and drawers. And of course we had breakfast in bed. (If there is one foul way to have breakfast, it's in bed. It's as absurd as bathing in the living room.) When we stepped out onto the sun-scorched terrace the lizards dropped off the balustrades as we walked forward. At night the two Mirremee watch dogs—fierce, red-eyed brutes—howled under our windows until I emptied the slop pail on them.

I made a water-color in the lemon garden one day and when these terrible creatures sidled up and sniffed my legs I had black butterflies in my abdomen! Arthur smiled and said not to be alarmed as the dogs went mad only at night! He was principally anxious for me to paint, so I used half-finished canvases of his and painted over them. I did an interior of his bedroom including a four-poster which he called his *Lit-de-Parade*. It included Nellie in a chair reading a dirty French novel. Arthur had added a bathroom, a huge one, to his room as a concession to modernity. Nellie was tubbing there one afternoon and Arthur barged in. There was no lock on the door. Much laughter ensued.

It was like that scene from the funniest book that was ever written, *Mr. and Mrs. Haddock Abroad* by Donald Ogden Stewart. When Mr. Haddock gets into the women's bath on a liner by mistake and discovers an old school friend in the tub. He walks over, and smiling an auld-lang-syne smile as

he looks down at her, says, "Why, Edith. Of all people! You are looking wonderful!"

If you don't think that's funny I don't want to meet you. I used to read that book aloud to people. I didn't care who they were, they might even be relatives. I'd roll off the lounge, across the rug, out the door, down the hall, into the elevator shaft, fall in and die! And even at that, feel that it was a break. Mark Twain at his best never did that to me. People who don't get a snort out of that story of Stewart's are charter members of a club Jim Metcalfe and I formed years ago called "the Better Dead Club." Acton Davies, I think, was one of our directors. Acton Davies was the blond dramatic critic of the *Sun*—he talked in a sissy falsetto voice, and an actor named Ravell called him a pansy or the equivalent. What a mistake! Davies found Ravell at the Hoffman House bar and knocked the bejesus out of him. It was a big laugh on Broadway at the time. It just happened that Davies belonged to the Polar Bear Club and bathed every day all winter off Coney Island; even on days they had to break the waves to get through the ice.

But getting back to our stay in Fiesole; Arthur kept urging me to paint.

"Dammit!" he said, "there isn't a date on a canvas in Florence since 1885."

Florence was so beautiful I wanted to paint everything in it.

Arthur was evidently still enamored of his lady, and he was all of a twitter when her arrival was imminent. Nellie insisted on our moving down to the Minerva Hotel as she imagined Arthur and Hortense would like to be alone. Arthur was much put out and didn't want us to leave. He insisted upon our coming back to meals, which was dandy as the Minerva wasn't so hot. So his chauffeur fetched us in the Fiat for food.

But it was just as well we made the move to the hotel. Hortense was humorless and a bit on the stuffy side. For instance, one noon Arthur laughingly called to us, "Come on to lunch," then grabbed us by the wrists and ran us dancing into

the dining room. Hortense tried to squelch him by saying in the haughtiest Gold Coast manner:

"Where is Giovanni? *He* should announce luncheon!"

Nevertheless Hortense was beautiful. And that makes up for a lot of major vices. Not everything, of course. But I'd settle for Beauty and Kindness—and you can have your Deans of Women.

I painted "Beautiful but Chicago" in the lemon garden and Arthur graced it with the most magnificent frame I ever saw; a frame like an ancient mellowed gilt doorway. Through the decades I continue to hear from friends who have been to Arthur's villa that the portrait of Hortense is still there. It was done over forty years ago. And all during these forty years I got letters from him asking me to come to Florence where he would provide me with a studio for nothing. Such an enthusiastic friend. At one point he wrote that his two boys were at Oxford and he feared they were going to be poets. One of them—a pleasant guy—became a sort of Dali with plain water.

No one who ever saw it would ever forget Villa Incontrì. I gave Jack Barrymore a letter to Arthur one time. He visited the villa and loved it. And who could forget those dinners on the wide graveled terrace—the only light besides the stars an oil lamp on the table—overlooking all of Firenze in the valley. I know it sounds silly!—nightingales singing in the trees.

6. GERMANY BEFORE WORLD WAR I, THE CONTINENT, AND LONDON AGAIN

IN THE light of what has happened since, I almost wonder if I could have dreamt my experience in Germany in 1903. In a little more than a decade would come World War Number One. German atrocities would not be fully believed although our hatred of the Kaiser was to be furious. Then we would forget it all. Then a second and even more terrible war, and loathing of the Germans especially focused upon Hitler and the Nazis would spread all over the world. Are all Germans Nazis? Are all Germans beasts? Should the whole race be destroyed? I myself believe there are no Nazis fit to live; that every last one should be destroyed. Especially Hitler's Youth.

If you had told me after my first trip to Germany that one day I would write these sentiments I would have pinked you with verbal buckshot, for this trip in 1903 was all roses, roses.

Herr Volrath, the American Express representative, met us at Hamburg, showed us everything in his town whether we wanted to see it or not, and showered bouquets on Nellie. His dialect was unbelievable; especially when he said we must see Hagenback's Zoo—"vere dey haf sefenty fife white beers; und dey make water (burp) arrainchments und slide toboccan into."

Such was Volrath's persistent kindness that it soon drove us out of Hamburg. This was ten years before World War I;

before the Germans were called Huns; when one thought of Germany as a place where people talked like Weber and Fields, ate sausages, had *Schutzenfests*, drank too much beer, and the girls were all named Gretchen and had yellow pigtailed and wooden shoes. There were reputed to be Prussians who shoved strangers off of sidewalks. There were, on the other hand, Bayreuth and Oberammergau, castles on the Rhine, Christmas trees, Heidelberg students who slashed each other's faces instead of playing football, and their ruler was a ridiculous, shriveled-arm Kaiser who claimed the world as his own and snorted around playing soldier. Most Americans, because they knew nothing of Germany's brutish and predatory history, thought of the German people as a rather home-loving, stupid, and kindly race.

Because I had lived in England and France and traveled pretty much over the rest of Europe, I came to Germany with a curiosity tinged with a bit of prejudice *against* rather than *for* the Germans. But after traveling all through the country and thinking over my impressions, I concluded that I had never met with such kindness in any other country. As a tourist I had, of course, not met any so-called aristocrats, had no letters of introduction (which I do not like anyway), but being like all artists a keen observer, I did see a great deal. I shall give you a typical example of what I mean by German kindness. We got off the train at some station, I forget just where. It was a long train and we happened to alight way back of the station platform and we were confused, for we knew we had to change trains—"einstiegen," I think they called it in their hideous language. As we stood bewildered with our bags, there were no porters around—out of the sunset came hurrying clouds of workmen intent on getting home to their dinners. I stopped one of them and yelled out the name of the town I wanted to go to. He, in turn, shouted to his mates, who literally swarmed to our aid, grabbing some of our suitcases while we snatched the rest. Over the ties and gravel around ends of other trains, over tracks went this volunteer horde to get us

to our impatiently whistling train. I cannot conceive of Englishmen or Frenchmen doing just that. For what? Obviously none of them wanted a tip. They would clearly have been insulted. That was but one of many courtesies and kindnesses Nellie and I experienced from the *common people*.

We went all through Germany, and Austria and Hungary as well; then on up into the mountains of Bavaria to Markneukirchen. If you have ever seen that dismal village you will perhaps wonder why on earth we went there. There was, however, a reason. This drab little hamlet was a center for the manufacture of musical instruments, and *Scribner's Magazine* had commissioned me to make eight water-color drawings for an article to be written by an expert on musical instruments. But the writer, who shall be nameless only because I've forgotten his name, had previously called me at my hotel in Dresden to say he couldn't write the article because his daughter was dying. I had cabled *Scribner's* the unfortunate news, whereat they cabled back: "Write the article yourself!"

I was flabbergasted. I knew nothing about violins and their brethren of the string section. But I couldn't afford to pass up a job then, so I went, a day's ride from civilization, to this miserable dump in the mountains.

Most of the German towns I had hitherto seen were picturesque, if a bit theatrical, but this one, famous alone for its one output, was numbing in its stark ugliness.

The commissionaire of the only hotel in town turned out to be a dachshund, who met all busses and scuttled back to report new arrivals to the manager. I never found out how Herr Heberlein, the town's leading violinmaker, knew I was in Markneukirchen or how he ever heard of me or *Scribner's*, but he came to welcome us, with a bouquet for Nellie and an invitation to dinner at his house the next day. He spoke a little broken English and Nellie knew a little Berlitz, so we could sort of communicate. He said he was the only man in the town who could speak any English at all, for he had lived for a couple of years on Avenue A in New York. He told us that he

had been treated so kindly in the United States that he would always love Americans; that nothing, as far as he was concerned, was too good for any Yankee. He certainly did his damndest to prove it to Nellie and me.

He came from a long line of violinmakers. Their principal output was what he termed "schwindles" (looking brightly at us in order to be sure that we knew what he meant). In other words, after completing a new violin they buried the finished product in the ground to age it. The majority of our fellow guests at the hotel were Russian buyers.

In the middle of the next day, we went to dine with the whole Heberlein family including in-laws in a big-comfortable house on the edge of the town. He called for us in an old-time open barouche bringing an enormous bouquet of old-fashioned flowers to Nellie, of course, and later drove us to an orchard for a picnic supper laid on pine tables. To our surprise the whole town was there with all their children, plus music, dancing and beer; to say nothing of food. We were the honored guests. Americans. This full-blooded, rather handsome Bavarian couldn't do enough for us. He came back with us to our hotel café and bought us drinks for the rest of the night. None of us ever went to bed. Like Volrath in Hamburg he nearly wore us out with his hospitality.

I finally got it across to him that I had work to do and only a short time to do it in. He arranged everything, carted my painting outfit to each factory I wanted to paint in, told the manager what to do for me, and in four days I did eight water-colors—from the making of violins and bull fiddles to the tubas, for which latter they poured hot lead from a forge into brass horn shapes.

Nellie, having nothing to do while I was painting, took walks around the town until she wandered by mischance into a street of brothels where dreadful people yelled at her. She came hurrying back to the hotel and was afraid to go out again, the poor dear. She being very beautiful, well dressed and foreign, I realized, as she did not, what an easy target she was for the

jibes of the underworld of any town. Muckers the world over hate beauty. While there is hope for the lower classes, there is none for the lowest classes.

At a big table near us in a restaurant in Heidelberg, a score of students were making whoopee according to their lights when they spied me. One of them came to my table and offered me his snuffbox. I could remember how Richard Mansfield as Beau Brummell took snuff. I followed his formula faithfully, even to the dusting of the lapel as the final gesture. This gay youngster backed over to his table and they all waited for me to give. I gave! That sneeze was so terrific that it still remains for me the pleasantest sensation I can ever remember experiencing. My explosion was greeted with cheers of delight by the table of students. I can't now imagine why I never became a snuff taker. It's an idea. I'm saving it.

In Cologne, a town where people shuffle all night long in droves through the streets, Nellie was suddenly stricken with lumbago. Having got her a doctor, there was nothing for me to do for two days but sit in the window and make faces at the office help in the building opposite. Under the care of that smart German doctor Nellie recovered rapidly, and within two days we were on our way up the Rhine. The Rhine. Artistically speaking, they can have it. The so-called castles look more like George Ehret's brewery buildings on the Harlem River—pretentious and ugly.

We left Berlin, which was unimpressive in spite of the build-up they gave it, and went to Vienna; incredibly lovely; more beautiful than Paris *thinks* Paris is.

When I recall Vienna before World War I, I see those gracious wide avenues with five rows of green trees in some of them, space, beautiful buildings, dark-haired officers in dove-gray capes (a contrast to the pasty-faced, pimply young blond German officers I had seen in such quantity), lovely girls whose upturned breasts were noticeable a block away, sunny *Volksgartens*. I especially remember an incident in the Englisher Garten where we dined on a terrace one still, sunlit eve-

ning. Suddenly we noticed the faces of the middle-class families at other tables gazing transfixed with horror at a French window. We saw what seemed to be a maniac leaping and pawing the windowpanes, rattling the grillwork and making faces right at Nellie and me. Suddenly my eyes dissolved the riddle. It was my old and dear friend, Gilbert White, the artist, whom nothing could dismay. He had heard I was in Vienna and had immediately ditched his family, with whom he was traveling, and to our delight traveled with us instead. A merry companion he was; then and always.

The three of us went to Buda-Pesth, the Kansas City of Mittel-Europa; the jumping-off spot into wild places and lands.

But something went wrong with my nerves as we neared that city. I began feeling uncomfortable at the stations. The wild *tzigane* fiddlers serenading the train didn't seem on the level somehow. There was something sinister about them that worried me. Yet on the run from Vienna to Buda-Pesth I had been thrilled with the rows of field workers standing on embankments watching the train run by; glorious creatures, these Hungarian peasants; mighty, bronzed, bare-chested men with gleaming scythes aloft; handsome peasant-girl workers, with the orange-pink radiance of the setting sun on their faces, looking like a frieze painted by Velasquez; all motionless, watching the train go by. Symbolic figures of the soil.

How I wanted to paint them. Good God! The things I have ached to paint!

But those long-haired fiddlers at the station; they haunted me. I got jittery.

I had heard that when you registered at a hotel in Buda-Pesth, they handed you a photo album to pick out the girl you'd like for the evening. Maybe my wife's being with me mitigated against my receiving this courtesy, for I was never shown the album. It left me feeling mildly cheated. There were no locks on the doors of the hotel and bellhops kept bursting into our bedroom without notice, which wasn't exactly restful. My uneasiness mounted and finally I confessed to Nellie that

I could not stand Buda-Pesth. She, being a kindly woman, made no protest although we had planned to stay several days, and we departed early the next morning. Even at that I had the hysterical feeling that a long, sharp knife would be driven into my back before I could get out of that town. The genial Austrian conductor remembered us from the day before and was astonished at our sudden return to Vienna. I couldn't have explained it to him. Nor can I to myself, either.

All I remember now of Buda-Pesth is that every shop had pictures outside of all the articles it had to sell, which I assume was because they lacked schools and their language was too difficult for even the natives to read. I was told Hungarians could all speak German but disdained it. Kansas City is a much nicer town.

But Vienna—that was a city! The flower of romance. Not mine nor even yours perhaps; just the essence of Romance. I loved sitting in *Volksgartens* listening to symphony orchestras. I recall with delight one *Kapellmeister* in particular who welcomed, with a flick of his baton, each arriving friend without losing a beat in the Kammenoi-Ostrow.

My wife and I had kept up our friendship with the Shackletons in Bushey. Dr. Shackleton and I and our wives joined the British Cycling Club. Luckily it was a still night on the English Channel when we took the night boat to St. Malo, for he and I had to sit up all night though we had been able to get bunks for Nellie and his wife Eileen. I sat on a wooden bench on the main deck reading Stevenson's *St. Ives* till sunrise. During the night I was hungry and found my way to the galley, where I straddled the floor-sleeping steward as I cut myself a ham sandwich. In the morning we all went down to breakfast—which we ate in a dining-sleeping saloon surrounded by sleeping passengers in tier bunks. It was unappetizing, this eating breakfast in a mass bedroom.

At St. Malo hundreds of bicycles were wheeled off the boat and we all had to line up while a uniformed French bureau-

crat, mumbling with a heavy Breton accent, laboriously made out passes for our machines and blotted them by *sprinkling sand*. Minor officialdom on the Continent is invariably funny; so fierce and dramatically important about trifles, while in England so matter-of-fact and almost comforting. But France never seems quite real to me.

At St. Servon—a town I vividly recall because we bicycled through holding onto our handle bars with one hand and our noses with the other, for it stank to heaven from tidewater and sewage—they had the funniest bridge. It was on steel stilts and moved to the other side of a river on wheels under the water. The trial of the martyred Dreyfus was going on a few miles away from us as we fried in the sun on the beach at near-by St. Enogat. The principal hazards of this excursion were the sabot nails we collected in our tires on the roads of Brittany.

The next summer the four of us went over to Holland for a two-week-holiday which only cost us \$85 each. It seemed as though we practically walked through it almost in an afternoon. When we signed up at Dutch hotels, I (to Shack's embarrassment, he being mid-Victorian in mind) always stipulated a double bed. His greatest moment of chagrin came one morning at the Mille Colonne—I think it was at the Hague—when he got his directions twisted and found himself weaving through hundreds of tables of guests in the dining room in his bathrobe, clutching his sponge, and trying to get back to his room. Shack had no sense of humor, but his wife Eileen had enough for both of them. Her eyes would crinkle up and tears of fun would fill up the lower lids. Nothing escaped her. What a priceless thing is the mother of humor—a sense of proportion. People without that are people behind plate glass, and though I am able to see their other good qualities, they are never my truest friends.

In Holland I painted water-colors every day. I loved the canals and the windmills looking like giant captive moths, and the burnt-sienna sails of the boats that seemed to be sailing

through the tall grass; the black and white Holstein cows. I would say to the other three after breakfast, as I started off with my painting kit: "I'll meet you for dinner. How will you find me?"

"Where there is the biggest crowd, old dear!" they would reply, and they spoke truth.

Once I was painting on the edge of a canal in Rotterdam and a throng of school children on their way home had gathered back of me. They were kneeling against my back, dribbling torn composition papers onto my wet painting. I waved them back with both hands.

"Shwimming!" they shrieked, and a woman came out of a house and purposely splattered me with a slopjar she emptied into the canal; but still I got a water-color out of it.

William Chase told me he had the same sort of experience, except that he was painting in oil so he squeezed a palmful of Prussian blue into one Dutch brat's hand and had his revenge.

"Flagg," he said, "you know how volatile Prussian blue is! Inside of two minutes that blue had spread itself onto the hands, faces and clothes of the entire gang." Chase chuckled as he thought of what had happened to them when they got home.

I crossed on the *Lusitania* with William Chase one time. A good painter, but a stuffed shirt withal. Rutger Bleecker Jewett was also aboard and he was madder than I was at the stupid effrontery of Chase, who knew I was a worshiper of John Singer Sargent. Chase claimed intimacy with the greatest modern painter and said these words to me: "We often lunch at the Hyde Park Hotel—wander in some day and come over to our table!" I thought it was gorgeously fatuous, but Rutger blew up. This silly little bearded painter of fish (no one could paint dead fish better than Chase—see Metropolitan Museum) wore piqué cravats held in place with rings. He had 365 rings,



J.M.F. in his late twenties. Flagg calls it his "go to hell" portrait. (*Photo by Arnold Genthe*)



Flagg's daughter (*Photo by Hal Phylfe*)

one for every day; and his wife, who was not with him on this trip, had chosen rings for each day he was to be away.

Whistler and he had painted each other. William Chase told one on himself, curiously enough.

"That you could have done this thing to me," said Whistler, on seeing Chase's portrait of him, "when I made *you* the dandy of the boulevards!"

Chase told me another one that I think is not so well known. Whistler and he were going out into the country in England to spend the day painting. When they arrived at the station Whistler's canvases were missing from the van.

"Mr. Whistler, were the canvases valuable?" said the porter anxiously.

"Not yet, my man, not yet!" Whistler replied.

Neither Whistler nor Chase could draw. Sargent could. So could Velasquez.

Have you heard this line of Whistler's? He had been staying overnight with a friend and called down the stairs the next morning:

"I say, where do you keep the scissors you trim your cuffs with?"

Sargent did a small thing once. Chase's pupils collected ten thousand dollars and paid Sargent to paint Chase's portrait, the one which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum. Sargent used an old canvas; one on which he had previously started a portrait of Wertheimer. Years passed, and in the crotch of Chase's breeches gradually emerged a head of Wertheimer upside down! This sort of thing can happen when you paint over a used canvas. An expert has since touched it out, and happily for the world of art Mr. Wertheimer no longer gazes upside down between William Chase's legs. Perhaps he will emerge again, although we hope not.

Sargent did so wonderfully by Wertheimer on another canvas. Wertheimer's friends deprecatingly said: "But he made you so Jewish." Wertheimer is said to have replied, in effect: "So what—I like it that way." And do you remember the

Wertheimer children and their *caniche* which Sargent painted? One of the great portraits of all time is, to my mind, Sargent's Marquand, which epitomizes the soul of an over-refined American. Watery-eyed, bloodless . . . a gentleman. You could break Marquand over your knee like a peppermint stick. Magnificent! Every so often I go over to the Metropolitan Museum and stand before it and think: "Jesus! To paint like that!" No painter has ever thrilled me so much.

I have always worshiped Sargent and have been disgusted at times by those self-anointed critics who have tried to toss Sargent into the Limbo with a phrase like "superficial cleverness."

If these self-preening jackals (there is one on every newspaper) only had half that "superficial cleverness." Suppose any one of these smugsters had been given the job to do the murals for the Boston Public Library. Can you imagine what fiascos would have replaced these frescos?

In London, I met Sargent on two or three occasions on Show Sunday at his studio in Tite Street, and I will confess to a great disappointment in his personality; which of course has no bearing on his art. Show Sunday in London is the Sunday before the opening of the Royal Academy when the Academicians show their exhibition paintings to their friends and their friends' friends in their own studios.

Thrilled as I was over his portraits, when I met Sargent I found him to be more English than the English; in fact, not to be too refined about it, his manner was snotty.

He made me feel like a navy. He wasn't human. He was English. Yet in actual fact he was no more English than I was. I recall that I looked at a canvas that leaned unframed against a wall of his studio.

"Mr. Sargent," I said, "that woman looks a lot like Maude Adams!"

She at that time was world famous for her *Peter Pan*.

"I nevah heard of hahl!" he replied in a bored accent.

In recent years I went to see Sargent's show in the Grand

Central Galleries—a retrospective exhibition of tight, inept 1880 portraits of his that stunk. In them there was no clue to the magnificence of his later paintings. It would have been wiser never to have shown these early Sargent canvases.

It was therefore with little sense of anticipation that I later went to a show of his drawings and cartoons for the Boston Library murals. Once more I worshiped! These drawings were so beautiful, so masterly. I once more swore allegiance to the master.

To counterbalance my disappointment at meeting Sargent, at about the same time I got to know William J. Locke. I had already illustrated his *Septimus* for the *American Magazine*, then an order to do *Simon the Jester* came along, making it a pleasant necessity for me to call on Locke at his house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, in order to get the manuscript. Locke was a smiling, delightful, big-boned man—entirely shrimp-colored. He probably wrote himself. At any rate there must have been some of the quixotic lovable qualities of Septimus in him—especially so if it were true, as I had heard, that Locke had rescued his beautiful wife from her first marriage in which she had been much abused by a worthless husband. She was also, I think, the inspiration for the charming “Lady with the Trained Cats” in *Simon the Jester*. I lunched with them at the Savoy and a few years later had the chance to welcome him in New York as a distinguished guest at the Dutch Treat Club.

7. ILLUSTRATING AT FULL SPEED

FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS I lived in New York at my studio apartment on 67th Street; drawing, painting and writing at an ever increasing tempo. Those were hard-working but gay years in the "Street Beautiful," as *Town Topics* sarcastically called it. However, there was reason behind this jibe, as there never was such a street in town as West 67th: fine modern apartment houses on the north side; and on the south, stables; brown, disreputable negro tenements; a garage that burnt up three different times; and on the corner, a notorious saloon which kept the night raucous with female yells, stabbings and bums hurtling out onto the icy pavements in wintertime.

New York was always the last city to install innovations; notably electric lights. Long after the sticks or the Middle West had been using electricity for illumination we New Yorkers were still reading by the gas-illuminated Welsbach mantle. Even in about 1903 when my apartment building was built, the fixtures for both electric bulbs *and* gas were installed, as if they weren't quite sure whether that Edison gadget had come to stay. That was when the bathtubs still had feet on their corners like big gravy boats. But the studios in our building really housed artists; not shady physicians, degenerate playboys and shrieking middle-aged pouter pigeons taking "voice" as is the present meaning of Manhattan "studios."

In this studio I did an average of an illustration a day for years, plus a lot of other things. For four years more I wrote continuously for the *American Magazine*. I had illustrated W. J. Locke in a number of his tales for them; whereupon the editors asked me to write whatever seemed amusing to me and illustrate it. We had great fun with the stuff. At least the editors enjoyed it, even if the readers may not have. Finally they said it must end, since the farmers in Kansas and their wives didn't care for it. Since I didn't care a whoop for Kansas either, it was almost an even break. Besides, I got two books out of the material.

I was sitting on top of the world—making friends and enemies lavishly. And curiously enough I wasn't drinking. If I took one sherry at parties it was my limit. I didn't need alcohol. I was having too good a time without it.

At about that time, artists' studios were being played up by the orange press as "dens of iniquity"—this angle was jam for Hearst's papers and they played it to the limit, paying models with a fleeting notoriety for their "exposés" of the vicious life behind the scenes in the world of art. The general theme was of course the innocent blue-eyed country girls lured to these degenerate brothels by rich, unscrupulous, handsome devils in smocks and berets who "plied them with burning liquor" and seduced and *ruined* them. After a "worse than death" session these innocent damsels were cast off "like an old glove." Beaten and bedraggled they blindly staggered forthwith to the East River, and their pitiful green corpses were picked up by the river police around 7:30 A.M. next day.

Most people who read this drivel seemed to believe it. But in fact, model life was pretty nearly the opposite. The artist was the "fall guy" as a rule. These innocent babes from Memphis, or Muncie, Indiana, were the real pursuers. There were then no model agencies like Johnny Powers to regulate the actions of these oversexed babes and make modeling the decent profession which it is today. Now models are overpaid and tend to be arrogant, but that's another story.

Today an artist's second question is, "What agency are you with, kid?"

If she says, "No agency," the artist maybe says, "Uh." (Meaning, "Taking a chance!") Well, that's up to the individual artist to decide.

But in those days between 1903 and the 1920's, we never knew what we were opening our studio doors to. Ask any old-timers. Seduction by experts, blackmail, trouble—O! Innocent girls? I beg your pardon. Artists' studios were then the answer, thanks to the lascivious press, to any runaway floozie's first impulse. And many of those girls were *so* beautiful; and artists are *such* fools! If I had this side of life to live over again, I'd again be just such a fool as I was!

Many an artist has married his model. There's only one reason; lack of control. I know. I did it myself. I went through hell; and I blame myself for being a fool.

Artists, especially illustrators, are a serious lot of craftsmen. Their job comes first. Models are models—to draw from—or, in these days, to photograph and draw from the prints, because that is so much simpler than troubling to learn to draw.

"Those were the days," said Flagg, nostalgically twirling his eyebrows, "when there was such a thing as illustration." There are just as good men today as there were then, but the scene and the system have changed without benefit to the artists. It is no longer a profession, it's a business. Like the drugstore is no longer a drugstore but a Woolworth. It really shows a technological trend which is death to art, and something new has been added; the *agent*. If that isn't mechanizing and regimenting, I'll eat my tube of zinc white. Inevitably with the agent comes crookedness. The kickback. Just like some union leaders, there are some art editors today who don't want to deal with artists! They don't like 'em. They only like agents. Why? Kickbacks come in handy to fill out the personal budget! An art editor told me it was the custom among certain agents to slip a century note under the art editor's clock or inkstand. Why? I, personally, through feeling outraged for my fellow

craftsmen, have *made an art editor refund* \$750 to an artist. And did the little worm of an artist acknowledge my help? He did not—even though he was on his uppers at the time, living in squalor with unwashed, battered dishes, wearing a dirty dressing gown in tenement diggings. I know, because I had to go there to see him. But I know that doesn't tell all the story. I don't know what his answers would be, but he must have some believable ones. He did have talent; not tops, but some, and terrific aspiration. Some people think that aspirations make an artist. I think not. It's a question of performance. There's no use for a homely old maid to wish to be Hedy LaMarr. She isn't.

I have known artists who have degenerated into art editors but only one art editor who graduated into an artist, and a damn fine one, Pruett Carter.

While on the subject of artists, I append a letter which impressed me when it appeared in the *Herald-Tribune*—September 9, 1938:

ART CAN'T BE TAUGHT

TO THE NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE:

I was interested in your article about Thomas Hart Benton and his revolt against the art teachers' mural test. He was so right. But he didn't go far enough.

I would say there should be no tests at all for art teachers.

There are no art teachers.

Art cannot be taught.

Artists are born that way. They educate themselves, or else they do not become educated.

The pressure of tradition is so strong that young artists succumb automatically to the universal routine of going to an art school. The gigantic ignorance of the public—which includes misguided and innocent-minded school boards and schools—is quaintly absurd. The feverish Communistic urge of the moment, which seems to be taken at its face value, of forcing millions of school children to "study art," fitted or unfitted (overwhelmingly the latter) is a crime against art itself.

The only classes that benefit by this are the weak sisters of the brush and the art material stores. The standard of creative art has been so lowered and debased since the "Nude Descending the Staircase" that illogically and inevitably it has become in the alleged mind of the public a minor trade into which hordes of its offspring can be shoveled with a forlorn hope that they can make a living in that racket if other similar jobs are overcrowded.

I happen to have been born an artist. Ask anyone who doesn't know. I wasted six years of my young life in art schools. As far as any benefit accruing to me from them—I was working on the outside all the time, anyway. Nothing but total disability or death could have stopped me. I had to be an artist—I was born that way. Such a pity!

But I heard about art schools—about Paris ateliers—there was propaganda I was too young to resist. So I went. I didn't take them very seriously. When the hired "master" had gotten within two seats of mine, I rose and went out and smoked a cigarette until he had passed my drawing—on an upturned chair. I didn't like to have him ruin my drawing with his silly mechanical marks. I had to teach myself. All artists have to. Egotists? Sure. Not conceited. Entirely different thing.

You can't breed an artist. You can breed only mediocrity. And how they are breeding it! I have weakly acquiesced to demands to be a judge of kids' posters, etcetera—believe me, there isn't a potential in a carload! I have no patience with "pretty good" artists—like the curate's egg. The artist and the artisan are confused in the world's mind. An artist is a creative monster. Who could have the effrontery to claim to have taught Velasquez, Michelangelo, Phidias, Da Vinci, Rembrandt, Correggio, El Greco, Raeburn, Sargent?—to name a few of the "big shots." Or, in other angles of art, who taught Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Brahms? Who? Who taught Homer, Voltaire, Shakespeare, Dickens, Poe, Emerson? Who?

An admirable letter. I wrote it myself.

Although my studio was a large one, I found I was working in a space about ten by five by my window, day in and day out, from nine to five. It became cramping. It was a beautiful studio, but there was too much of that cinquecento furniture Nellie and I had brought back from Florence. It was quiet—

the only sounds I could hear with my windows open were piano and voices—the pupils of Maestro Buzzi-Peccia in his studio on the ground floor, and those were rarely unpleasant. Caruso certainly wasn't anyone to complain to the janitor about on the afternoons he cantered around the track of his great larynx with his old friend Buzzi-Peccia smiling in the judge's stand. Caruso occasionally used to whip up his own Spaghetti Caruso for his old friends in the kitchen there. I would have liked being one of them. I knew Buzzi-Peccia, a charming and dignified Italian gent, and made a head of him which seemed to please him. Then there was Cecil Arden, his pupil and friend. It was a man's name she had, but she was no man. She was, on the contrary, a very beautiful blonde concert singer. I used to think what a break for the maestro, having such a vibrant lovely coming in and out of his studio. I had a dance with her once at an Illustrators' Ball—which made me still more envious of Signor Buzzi-Peccia.

Nell had a charwoman, a young, overhealthy Italian girl who was good-looking in a cheap, shiny, vulgar way. She used to say whatever came in her head. Here is a sample remark to Nell:

"I wouldn't trust no young husbint locked up in that studio wit' dem good lookin' models as he calls 'em!"

That sort of thing plus the cramped space I had for an actual workshop finally persuaded me to take an outside studio. Dr. Galpin had a number of studios over his drugstore on 57th Street and Sixth Avenue. Neysa McMein had one and so did Gruger (Brownie's idol) and some other artists. I rented one, too. Mine had a removable fake wall between windows through which all pianos coming or leaving the building were swung; which was fairly embarrassing and discommoding to me, as can be imagined.

One cold, rainy afternoon I was alone and working on back-grounds and in blew a female character. My "second sight" was asleep at the switch that day or I would have seen that this female was to dominate my thoughts and emotions for

two or three years from that moment. I was sunk. I got it bad. It turned out my evil genius, Arthur William Brown, had sicked her on to me. With an uncanny and malicious prescience Brown knew this gal was a type that would enthrall me. Everything about her appearance was against her. She was sloppily dressed in every detail. She was wet from the storm and she was hungry. But . . . she was so damned beautiful! First things first. I sent down to the Alps for tea and toast, which was what she wanted first. The second thing she wanted was a baby by me. Period. And she didn't mean at some future time. She meant immediately. This, to me, was a tall order. I didn't happen at the moment to care for the idea. I didn't want a baby. Ever. I told her it wasn't even a nice afternoon for one. I finally talked her out of it but evidently the idea persisted, for I heard she told everybody in her home town that the baby she had later on by a legitimate husband was *my* baby! Of course she was Southern. That is obvious. The South is where most of America's beautiful women come from. They are all man-traps and brought up by their realistic, ruthless mothers to be just that. She wanted to be my model, and I thought it was a "must." I did my best to try to make her look presentable; told her what to do with her great armfuls of lion-colored hair, made her use lipstick; and though in general she acquiesced to most of my dictums, she positively wouldn't accept more than \$15 a week! Nor would she pose for anybody else.

I have hesitated thus far to speak of the beautiful Mitzi for fear of harming her. Her great cross was her nationality. She is German. But now Germany is smashed—probably not enough. It should have been obliterated from the face of the earth, as the Japs should be. I won't concede one good Jap, born here or there, *not one*. But there have been and are a few good Germans. But not enough to make the damned race worth saving. So Mitzi's nationality was staring her in the face at every turn. It became a nightmare even though she had become an American citizen. The contempt and hatred the world had for Germans, and rightly, bore into her gentle soul. She

was one of the exceptions, but that didn't help. The stigma of her foul race followed her everywhere. She never admitted her origin unless forced to; she changed her name; she let it be thought that she was a Norwegian, as her mother was, and she even spoke Norwegian. She had a very tough time.

She was my best model for a number of years when I was still doing illustrations. This little "foreener," as she first pronounced it, happens to be a lady; and she also happens to have courage, which she has needed.

Across the hall in the duplicate to my duplex lived my pal Walter Appleton Clark with his wife Nancy, who dressed the way he liked and did what he told her to do, so they were happily married. Walter on the other hand was physically faithful to Nancy, which was rather extraordinary for a young man who was beset by females. We used to roar with glee while comparing our fan mail and kid each other with random erotic phrases from these letters. One young lady wrote Walter, "... My love for you is like a wolf gnawing at my heart!" and one of mine was, "... If you will meet me in Chicago and give me one day of your life ..." and another was, "... If you will answer this there will be one happy girl in Kansas City tonight!" Our wives enjoyed this nonsense. I'm sure Nellie, my mother-wife, had no illusions about me.

I must tell you more about Walter. He was my most intimate friend and we were doing almost parallel jobs at the time. He, using wash or gouache drawings, had the double middle page of *Collier's*. I had the double middle page of *Harper's Weekly* in penanink. We did social cartoons and we had to think up a lot of ideas ahead. We used to meet regularly every week in his or my studio to compare ideas. We sometimes exchanged subjects. One of us would say, for example: "I think the idea of the 1864 Zouaves is better for you, but Father's Day is really down my alley, isn't it?" And we'd swap. A unique intimacy of minds. I loved and admired Walter; a grand human and a great artist. He was idolized by his pupils at the Art League.

To my mind he was second only to Howard Pyle as America's number one illustrator.

Artists are *sometimes* psychic—as I will show. But I was distinctly not so about Walter's son, John: Although we were in and out of each others apartments on an informal basis a dozen times a day, I never guessed that Nancy was with child. She wore loose Chinese jackets and I merely thought she had a funny shape and let it go at that. Nellie and the two Clarks had the laugh on me when Walter's parentage came as a complete surprise to me.

But here is an example of the psychic, or beyond the ordinary. A month before the birth of his son, Walter in a series of illustrations for *The Awakening of Helena Ritchie* had painted a little boy of about four—David in the story—and had told Nancy that her baby would be a boy and look like that at the age of four. And that came absolutely true! On this same subject, many years later, when I was married again, I painted an Alice-in-Wonderland screen with every character in the story on the three panels for my daughter, as yet unborn. It featured Alice with the Flamingo as a croquet mallet. Later my daughter grew to look exactly like the Alice I had painted. Lord & Taylor once exhibited this screen in their Fifth Avenue shop window.

Walter Clark had a talent I have never seen equaled for painting still-life authentically, perfectly, *without models*, "out of his head," as they say. It seems fantastic that today he is unknown except by some of the old-timers who still recognize that no artist now living is his superior. Like all really great people he was simple, without swank, honest, humorous and lovable. He died at thirty—at the beginning of his fame. Johnny Adams and I carried his ashes in a small metal box between our feet in a day coach to Woodlawn to bury them. We collected Walter's canvases and drawings and through the generosity of Mr. Knoedler, who gave his galleries—then at 34th Street and Fifth Avenue—without charge, sold enough to give Nancy a sum to tide her over. Nancy later married the presi-

dent of a big hardware company. This seemed to me like someone ordering corned beef and cabbage after having partridge the night before.

One summer I bought four acres on the shore at Biddeford Pool, Maine, from Old Jerry Bunker, who lived mysteriously in a windowless little shack where he dried his cod and hake. I designed a house and built it and have lived there for the summers for thirty years. A lot of friends gradually came there and rented cottages. George Barr McCutcheon of *Graustark* fame, the Wallace Irwins, the Julian Streets. Still others of our mob frequented "the Pool" as visitors, like the Walter Clarks, the Johnny Adamses, Wally Morgan (the Artists' Artist!), the Arthur William Browns, of course, Charles Hanson Towne, and the Rupert Hugheses. Charlie (Chuck) Towne was always the L. of the P. He was dubbed "the Rough Diamond" by F.P.A. In order fully to appreciate how funny that is, you would have to know Charlie. He was born on Ground Hog Day but he never saw his own shadow because he didn't cast one—only sunshine.

At our summer home we always had breakfast at eight o'clock. If guests didn't come to the dining room and get it, it was just too bad. No breakfasts in bed. Once when Charlie Towne was visiting us he arose and appeared almost on time. I'd been having constant trouble getting him up mornings. One morning as we sat down to breakfast with Charlie, our guest, absent again, I said to Nell:

"As usual—the Bed-ridden Poet!"

I got up and dashed into Charlie's room. There he was—in bed snoring! As I yanked the covers off, Charlie sat up smiling, fully dressed even to his shoes.

Towne's imitations were always belly laughs. His most famous one, Minnie Maddern Fiske using six chairs, was always demanded. He did a juicy impersonation of a lady author in her garden—we had just driven over to Hollis on the Saco River to see Kate Douglas Wiggin who wrote *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. Charlie, with a watering pot and a hen's

claw, got down on his knees at the edge of a supposed flower-bed and with becoming modesty continually tucked away at an imaginary skirt, meanwhile looking furtively over his shoulder at an equally imaginary careful of staring sight-seers who had arrived to peer over the hedge at the celebrated "lady author." Once sure of the presence of "her" audience, "she" would begin digging and humming as if *dreaming* that "she" wasn't alone. It was a beautiful burlesque of posturing vanity.

The only time Charlie wasn't amusing was in an open car. He always wanted to go for drives, but in those days the roads were dusty and full of "thank-ye-marms" and each bounce made the Good Dust-grey Poet scream like a catamount being robbed of her young!

The hour for the carriage trade to bathe at the beach was noon, and in the afternoon it was left to nurses, babies and chauffeurs. So one afternoon late, Grace, Arthur William Brown's wife, and Nell returned to the house practically begging Brownie and me to ask them the cause of their wicked and mysterious smiles. It seems they had flouted Mrs. Grundy, cast respectability aside and laid themselves open to being called "fast women."

"And just how did you do that, my dear trollops?" we asked. They looked furtively about, then said: "We went in bathing . . . without our stockings!"

Brownie and I, being broad-minded, forgave them, little foreseeing that thirty years later women would bathe in public without so much as, let us say, a parasol.

The natives of this tiny Maine fishing village which dated back to the 1600's were descendants of families from Bideford in Devonshire. The same family names—Fletcher, Hussey, Goldthwaite, etc.—had persisted through the centuries, and because the natives had not gone afield to marry the place was even supplied, according to old English custom, with its "village idiot."

I wrote them up one time in a magazine article carefully changing their names and even the locale, but they saw

through it and some of them wouldn't speak to me for a long time afterwards in spite of the fact that the stories I told were merely funny and not at all derogatory. They're powerful tetchy Down East. All the old males were Cap'n's even if they commanded nothing larger than a dory. There was one old rip, the most important thereabouts, who had a fairly white beard, tobacco-stained from each corner of his mouth, who rented buckboards to "mealers" (summer people) and didn't much care what he said to them. If Mrs. Smith greeted him, "Good morning, Cap'n!" he'd reply, "Good enough fer me, by Christ!" This same lady driving up one time to the Cap'n's house saw the red-socked feet of the owner resting on the sill of an open window and asked him why he did it. The Cap'n said, "Wal, so's folks'll think it's a pot of geraniums."

One summer when genial William Howard Taft was President of the U.S. he stopped by at the Pool for a few hours to see some of his relatives who had cottages there. He arrived in the presidential yacht accompanied by many secret service men and his military aide, a nice fellow named Archibald Clavering de Graffeuried Butt. Someone said the name sounded like the kitchen stove falling downstairs. The President held a brief reception at our little clubhouse, and I was asked to lend my big new Thomas Flier so that he might be driven to the club in style. My pleasant chauffeur, Lloyd, sober and clean for the occasion, drove the Chief, with secret service men on the running boards in the best American tradition. Little as the place was, a big turnout of summer people gathered to greet Mr. Taft, and every last person, including the fat old ladies in their summer prints, was patted on the chest and the backside by two secret service men stationed on either side of the reception room.

I had to have my car springs mended after Taft's ride. He was an enormous man, and the springs of the best of those early cars weren't tempered as well as those of the cheapest little mass-produced auto of today.

8. THE DUTCH TREAT CLUB AND JACK BARRYMORE

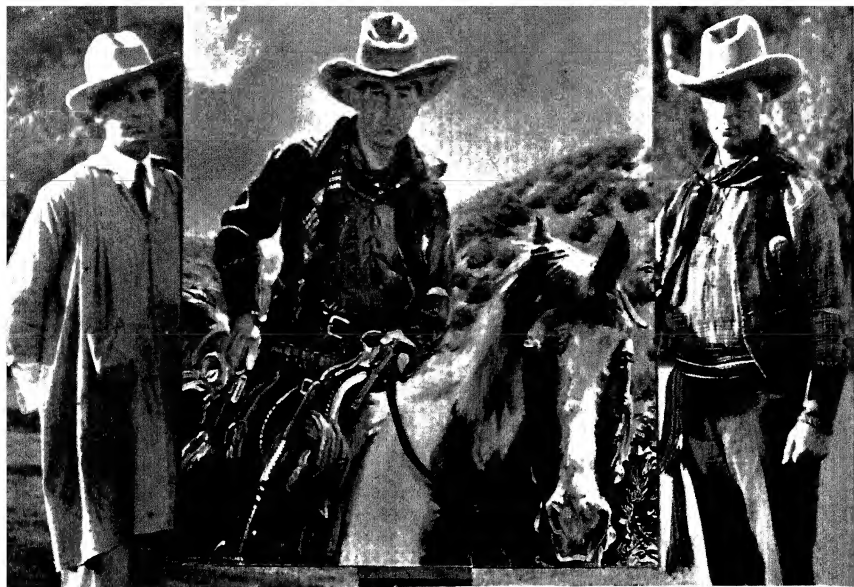
I THINK eleven of us founded the Dutch Treat Club in 1911 at the old St. Denis Hotel, which no longer exists. The club was Tom Masson's idea, but Charlie Williams, although he was really not one of the founding eleven, will no doubt claim it.

Charlie thinks he started every artistic and literary club since they called the town New Amsterdam.

We met on Tuesdays for lunch, shifting our meeting place from time to time. After the St. Denis came the Brevoort, where our dining room was so chilly I painted a grate fire on the white boards that masked the unused fireplace. My pigments—mustard, tomato ketchup and pickled walnuts. Other moves took our Tuesday gathering successfully to the Hotel Prince George, Mouquin's, the Hotel Martinique and Keene's Chop House. In the latter place we met for several years, and I think we had our best times there. I had a board of governors who were not too unruly. Julian Street came on the board, and as he had once been a member of an advertising agency, Street and Finney, he was heatedly eloquent against having advertising men eligible. I let him have his way. We had as members all the stars in literary and artistic America. And as Pop Gibson of the *Cosmopolitan* said, "Never put money into a clubhouse—that is fatal—I've seen it happen—you boys aren't businessmen—but if you get a clubhouse you'll have to take a lot of businessmen in to keep the thing going."



Flagg writes and acts in a Writers' and Artists' burlesque show in 1913. (*Left to right, back row*) Julian Street, Charles Dana Gibson, Charles Hanson Towne. (*Front row*) Burgess Johnson, Rupert Hughes, Will Irwin, John Wolcott Adams, Mr. Flagg, George Barr McCutcheon, Wallace Irwin.



William S. Hart—"Two-Gun Bill"—and his famous horse, Paint. Portrait by Tilagg in Hollywood. (© Keystone Photo Service)



Ruby De Remer, Flagg, and Olin Howland in *Perfectly Fiendish Flanagan*—a two-reel satire on Bill Hart written and acted by the author

Another founding father was Frank Crowninshield, who is a few minutes older than I and who bought posters from me when he was art editor of *Appleton's* and I was sixteen. "Crowny," as his old friends call him, the wit, the always polished man of the globe, despite the fine head start I gave him, is intelligent on every subject but one—art. With great reluctance I say a little bit less than nothing in these pages about "modern art." I just rely on the evidence, that dreadful gallery of modern fungi Crowny reproduced for years in *Vanity Fair*. I look at him, when I have that pleasure, with wide-eyed incredulity. How can this handsome intellectual gentleman, this rather wicked, entirely bland sophisticate, so disarming to any mother's daughter, this man whom the Artists and Writers Golf Association look upon with admiration and a touch of awe—how can he have such a horrendous taste in art?

Well, anyway, Crowny found that the Dutch Treat Club was growing too fast for his taste, so he snatched a bunch of D.T. members who agreed with him and started the Coffee House Club. There were no ruffled feelings and things went on their appointed way.

Tom Masson, first president of the Dutch Treat, faced one difficult problem. Moffat and Yard were the publishers of George Sylvester Viereck, the alleged mouthpiece of Withered-Arm-Willie Hohenzollern—and they had helped to make said Viereck a member of the club. Shortly after his first appearance in our midst (I happened not to be present that Tuesday but was told about it) he gave voice to his credo, which so shocked and incensed Moffat and Yard and Rupert Hughes that they called a meeting which ended in a unanimous move to get Herr Viereck out of the club. Unpleasant complications and publicity could be avoided in one way, they decided. The Dutch Treat Club disbanded and went out of existence. Then it was re-formed with Viereck on the outside.

The first operetta the club put on was written by that lovable young crackpot Jack Reed, a brilliant writer and lyricist, then

just out of Harvard. He took time out to write this scintillating little satire on magazines between writing poetry, fomenting strikes and riots in Paterson, N.J., and getting in and out of jail with Emma Goldman. Once, at luncheon, Jack said he would much prefer to be lunching with murderers. Every man to his taste, but I hoped that was not the reason Crownyn formed the Coffee House Club.

Jack wrote some brilliant stuff. His sensational and explosive career ended in Russia. He is buried in the wall of the Kremlin close to Lenin's tomb.

I was president of the D.T. after Tom Masson and continued for eight years to make it live up to my motto for it—"We strive to annoy!"

I wrote the annual shows, all lampooning the artistic professions and the magazines. The wonderfully gifted Bill Daly generally wrote the music when he could take time off from leading "Hitchy's" orchestra. Ernest Schelling, that genial musician, was a great friend of Bill's and often sat in on Bill's orchestra rehearsals, leaned-back and smiling—when we asked him what he was smiling at, he said at the delightful humor of Bill's music.

Bill was a master musician. He orchestrated most of George Gershwin's compositions and had one of the finest orchestras on the air. Tommy Dorsey used to play trombone for him, if that means anything to you.

Deems Taylor wrote our music one year, and of course did it brilliantly. We had wonderful annual banquets—after dinner the tables were rolled out and chairs moved forward toward the stage. Men came from as far as California to these shows. Those from Washington, D.C., would say: "Why, these are as good as the Gridiron Club!"

If they had been no better than that, I'd have quit writing 'em!

One time up at Biddeford Pool, Julian Street—with his eternal big black cigar shuttling from east to west in his mouth—and I were writing an ode to George Barr McCutcheon on his birthday. The King's Birthday honors had happened to be

listed in the papers and they seemed very funny to us—actors made Sir this and that. There was a famous music hall clown in England called Little Tich. He had boots over a yard long and he would rise slowly on his toes until you couldn't bear it and rolled over into the aisle. I asked Judy Street if he didn't think the King ought to make this clown Sir Little Tich. Which gave me the idea of Birthday Honors for our banquets at the D.T.

Bob Aitkin, the sculptor, designed the double-cross medal which we had cast in bronze. One was hung around the neck of each of the four Birthday Honor victims each year just before the show. These victims were carefully chosen because there was something sufficiently remarkable or colorful about them for me to go to work on. So I read at each trembling candidate what the privileges were that went with the medals. Charles Hanson Towne was apparently quite overcome at the right vested in him to stand for five hours stark naked in Tiffany's window on St. Valentine's Day with a giant queen olive in his navel.

Twenty-five years have passed and the Dutch Treat Club has persisted under the presidency for many years of the Human Niblick, old Bud Kelland of Arizona and Port Washington; the man who talks so cross and writes so pretty. He continued to use the old double-cross medal, now done cheaply in plaster, to decorate guests of honor after he has softened them up with vitriol.

The intimacy of the Dutch Treat Club of the old days is lacking now. It has fatty degeneration of the membership. Advertising men are no longer banned—in fact the club is entirely surrounded by Ray Vir Den of Lennen and Mitchell. For years now, Ray has been putting on the annual D.T. shows with enormous verve and success. He is still rubicund, good-natured, and the greatest troubadour in America. When you have Vir Den and his guitar and his songs and his artistry in a room for an evening—you've got something out of the top drawer. And if one could still add the lamented McNamara, the big Irish cop, life would be rich indeed.

To step back a moment. Once when I was head man we

had Arnold Bennett night down at Keene's. Bennett had just written *Buried Alive* and had come over here from England. George Doran, his publisher, also my friend and publisher, was his sponsor in New York and was trying, not always successfully, to ride his star author. Bennett was an hour late getting to the dinner and made some piffing excuse for holding us up. As the meal proceeded, I found to my dismay that I was liking Mr. Bennett less and less. He had an inferiority complex, although we didn't know the phrase at that time. I began to see why Walter Hale, the actor-artist, had learned to hate the man in England. He was utterly Five Towns, stupidly rude in a welcoming atmosphere. I was shocked, for I had loved his books. Having heard that *Buried Alive* had been put on in London as a play and that it would soon be produced in New York, I asked him if *he* had done the dramatization.

"What do *you* think?" he said sarcastically.

I said it didn't necessarily follow that a novelist dramatized his own book. I was put on edge at his manner.

At long last he tried to be polite and spoke of knowing my work in England.

I was naturally pleased and said, "Am I known over there?" The buck-toothed bounder bared his long pale green fangs in what was evidently meant to be a smile and said:

"My dear man . . . your name is a household word in England—like Sunlight Soap!"

Ah, well; he was the honored guest. I counted ten.

Later I made a double-page cartoon called "Never Meet Your Favorite Author!" in a series I was doing. I further revenged myself on him by a vicious caricature for Norman Hapgood's *Harper's Weekly*.

The best exposition of the art of caricaturing was written by one of the world's best caricaturists, that great stylist Max Beerbohm, whose *Zulieka Dobson* many of my writing friends wished they had written. Most of them also wish they had written Leonard Merrick's *Conrad in Quest of his Youth*; but if they reread it today I don't believe they would. It dates.

There are five other caricaturists who are great; in this order:

David Low, the Australian, the greatest living. Then come W. Cotton, Floyd Davis, Frueh and Conrado Massaguer. Babbitts always say So-and-So did a "cartoon" of me! They mean *caricature*. They always call a drawing a *sketch*. They might as well call an appendectomy a haircut!

To return to the Dutch Treat Club (do you mind?—you've nothing to do till five o'clock). I am the only Honorary Life Member of a membership which has now grown to appalling size. It is not a club. It is a battalion. Young fellows mistakenly thinking I have any influence in it would ask me to write the committee, or Bud, or Ray, and plead their admittance. It is so huge now that members have to be proposed and seconded and have letters written by obscure fellow members *to get out of it*.

In order to get an attendance at the Dutch Treat luncheons it is now necessary to put on a show. We all get weekly postal cards listing the olio for the lunch. We tick down the list... let's see... "Harold Ickes will play 'Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair' on the sweet potato... uhm... Gypsy Rose Lee will... nuts, I'll bet she won't... Um... Dr. Ignatz Spigot of Guatemala will imitate the Belching Llamas of the Andes... Oh, yeah?... Master Buddy McGinty, the four-year-old Eskimo, will play Schumann's Concerto in A Minor on the ribs of a pet seal... sounds wonderful... and I can hide my raw mutton chop and the Lyonnaise potatoes under my napkin... let's go! I'm sure to see somebody I'd forgotten hated my living lights!"

All these pinch-hitters who take over the gavel in the absence of that irreplaceable and lovable Gila monster, Bud of Arizona, are stopgaps, from Bill Chenery of *Collier's* to Lowell Thomas the Over-Emphasizer! They haven't the master's touch. They carry on, feebly if gallantly.

The first show I wrote for the Dutch Treat Club was "The Chicken," and Bill Daly wrote the music. He was a born musician and could play any instrument in the orchestra. This gifted and lovable friend was unhappily married to an un-

pleasant woman with the wrong shade of red hair. He is no longer married to her. He is dead.

I played the part of the Devil in my show and Jack Barrymore was very keen about making me up for the part. I had missed my vocation, Jack told me, I should have been an actor. This was funny coming from him who had not wanted to be an actor, but an artist.

"Acting," he said, "all you have to do is to put red paint on your nose and walk on."

Only a Barrymore could say that and get away with it too. I told Gene Fowler when he was writing *Goodnight, Sweet Prince* (and I bet I know what Jack would have made of *that* title if he'd heard it!) a couple of stories about the Profile, but I wasn't going to hand over all I knew as I was saving some of it for my own book. But Fowler didn't really need the help as nothing could have been more marvelous than his story of J.B.! One night when a lot of us were discussing Gene's book, Ray Vir Den got so enthusiastic about it he said the writing of the life overshadows Barrymore himself.

Jack was one of the high spots in my life and I knew him well. I knew all the Barrymores and "Uncle John" Drew too. I used to tell Jack that I was keener about him than about any of his wives. And he had three wives. And charming women they were. Then his foot slipped and he said "I will" when he should have said, "The hell I will!"

I first knew this fabulous zany when he was about sixteen riding about on a bicycle in a once-white turtleneck sweater. Then I didn't see him until several years later coming home on the old *Deutschland* with Ethel. Her birthday was celebrated on the way over, a Captain's dinner in her honor, and *she* gave presents to everybody. She was coming home from successes in England and had also got herself engaged to Kenneth Graham of the Coldstream Guards. She showed me his picture and purred about his lovely "trailing teeth." Jack was just her outrageously handsome and naughty young brother who was dated up for necking every evening by a different "peach"



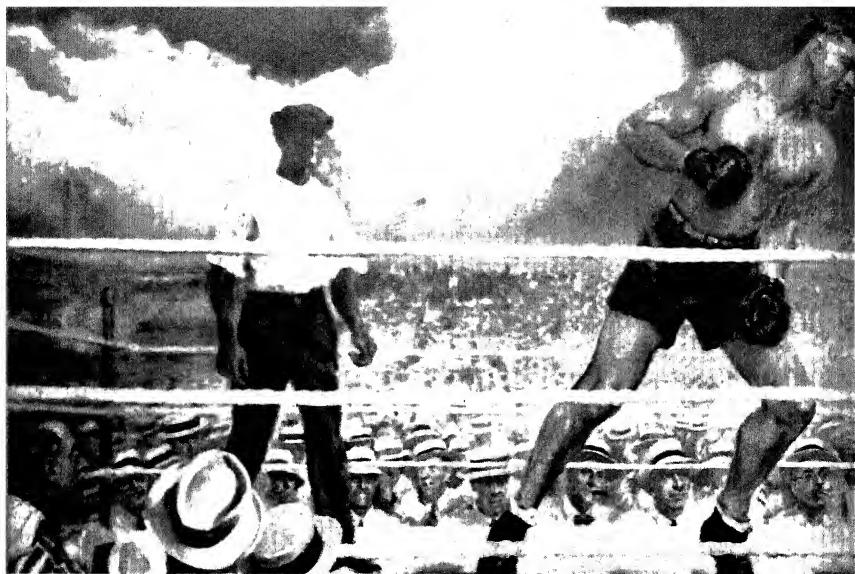
Frank Crowninshield, the
captive gentleman of the
Artists' and Writers' golf mob

FRANK CROWNINSHIELD
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

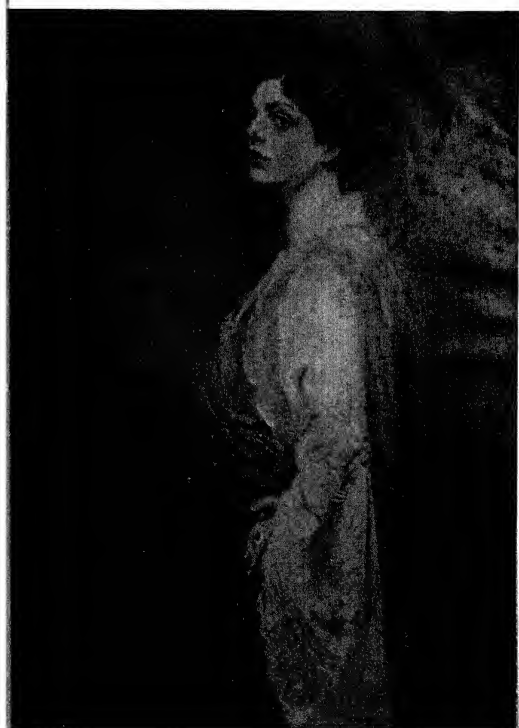


The one-time toast of the
world—Garbo

GRETA GARBO
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

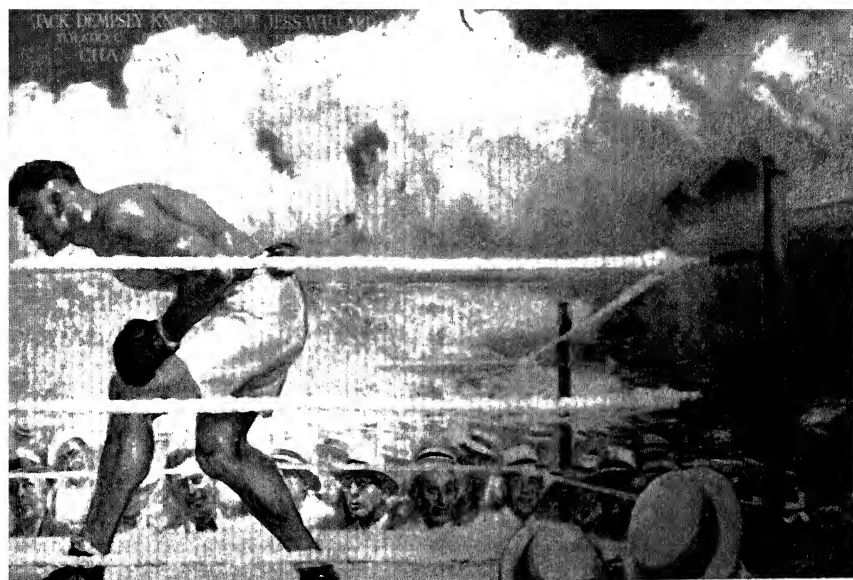


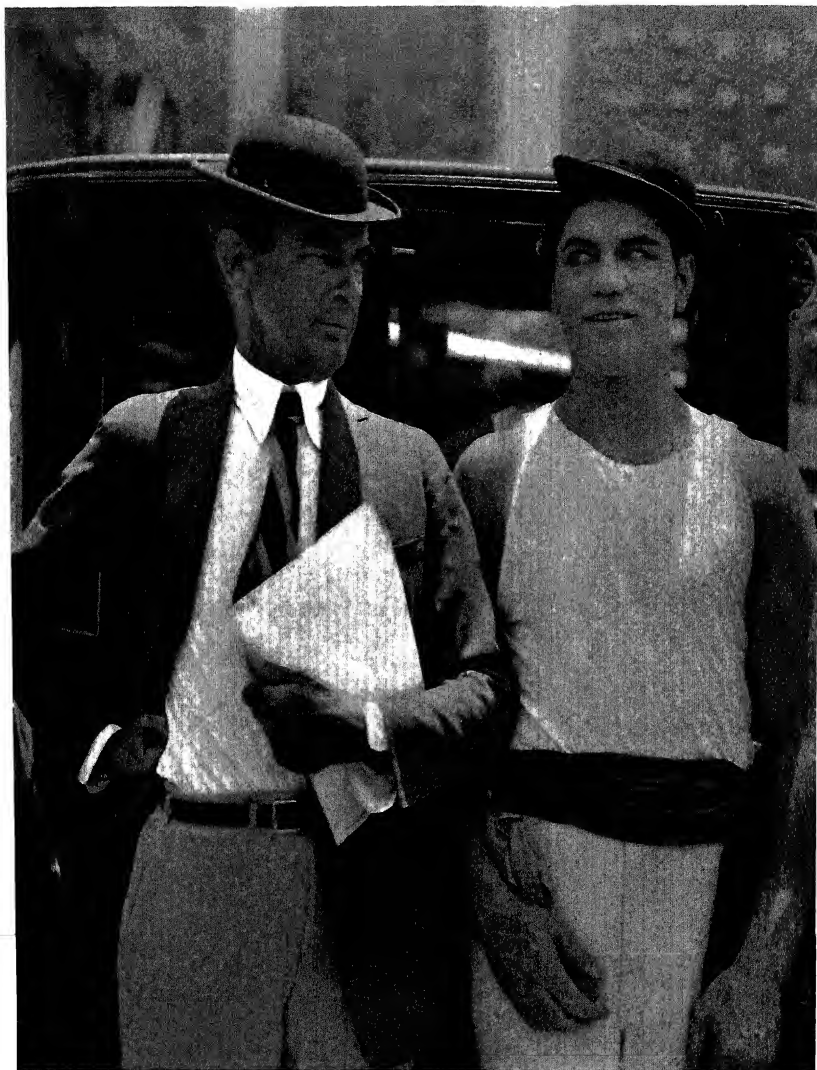
Flagg's mural of the
Dempsey-Willard Fight
in 1919. Painting hangs
in Jack's restaurant



Ethel Barrymore, por-
trait by Flagg (©*Inter-
national News*)

Jack Barrymore as Ham-
let





Jack Dempsey and Flagg in Hollywood—1924

in the shadows of a lifeboat on the upper deck. Nell and I used to sit in Ethel's little cabin evenings and gab and roar at Jack's imitations of French café singers as he sat cross-legged on Ethel's lower berth. Nothing less than superlatives for Jack.

Lionel met them both at the dock and hustled Jack off mysteriously to avoid a sheriff's writ or something unpleasant. We all met the next day at Sherry's for lunch with Uncle John. We had Rocky Ford melons and iced-fish salad. It was New York summer at its hottest.

My estimation of the Barrymores is frankly this: There never were such people on sea or land, they are the most charming humans, the most talented, the wittiest, the most delightful people ever given the bum's rush out of Heaven; and at the same time probably the most self-centered, spoiled, irresponsible leprechauns ever to crawl out of a hollow tree. It was like this. Either you took them as they were—or else! Personally I loved them without demanding much. For my part, life would have been much duller without them. Jack and I had a lot in common (possibly the less admirable traits), still we did get on beautifully. We were together at least four nights a week for several years. Sometimes when I'd go to see Jack after a matinee of *The Fortune Hunter* there would be a queue of predatory females waiting at the stage door to see their idol. There always were some heavily veiled ladies in the line whose husbands evidently did not entirely appease them.

Maybe some of the less robust of these dames might have felt a bit queasy if they had seen the handsome hero taking off his makeup, half of which stained his undershirt. Obviously it had not collected all that gruesome brown in a mere week.

When he was married to Katharine Harris and was living at 36 Gramercy Park he used to spend a lot of time in the afternoons in my studio poring over books on art. Sometimes he would leave a taxi waiting for him all afternoon with meter ticking. Then Katharine would drift in.

One of the most amusing spectacles to me is married people. I sort of enjoy sitting back in my seat and watching the shows

they put on. It's interesting to see the variations of the really simple but pathetic proposition: Boy tied to Girl. I am fascinated by the undertones and the overtones; the "decent" repressions of the basic emotions that the legal but artificial partnership imposes on them.

Jack's attitude toward Katharine was amused, mocking, possessive, jealous. He called her "the Mental Giantess" because she had the cerebral equipment of a flamingo. She got tired of being wherever she was after twenty minutes had elapsed, and this bored Jack. Her lanky, blonde beauty was accompanied by a decided body urge. After one look at her I had to paint her portrait. After that she posed a lot for me in illustrations. Jack got peeved at one time when I asked her to pose for me the next afternoon and snarled:

"Who the hell is she married to anyway?"

"I, too, have always preferred being an artist!" I answered.

He and I were walking behind Nell and Katharine when he nodded toward his lovely young wife and said:

"She walks just like a cinnamon bear, doesn't she?"

He would often grab her by the chin, snake out his handkerchief and savagely wipe off her lipstick. One of his favorite epithets for men he disliked was—"Splendid fellow!" If a man looked admiringly at Katharine, and few men didn't, Jack would growl: "He has a Light in his Eye!" But as he was liquored most of the time, his attentions to his wife were mostly critical. We had a table reserved at the Claridge every Sunday for supper and Jack would order an elaborate meal with great gusto, excuse himself, and when he returned to the table would be smiling and elaborately and amusingly stilted in his remarks. Katharine would ask him how many more double-Dubonnets he had lapped up. He would be indignant, though still smiling, and say:

"Double-Dubonnets? I haven't as a matter of fact had a drink for three weeks!"

But when the dinner was served he wouldn't touch it.

Katharine, being "Society," inveigled him semioccasionally

into going with her to some ritzy party, possibly to a ball given by her aunt, who was a Mrs. Oelrichs, I think. Jack called Katharine's aunt the Aztec Queen on account of her flamboyant taste in gorgeous and glittering jewelry, and he only dressed in white tie and tails under protest. He had a much better time in a Bowery saloon. He was occasionally missing for days at a time, and would at last be located by the frantic efforts of his wife's friends; usually in the Bowery. He met us late at Delmonico's, then at 44th Street and Fifth, after we had waited in the lobby a long time. He came in very drunk and very dirty, the fur lapels on his coat stained unspeakably—but with a gaiety unquenchable, a mocking elegance and that unbeatable charm that melted all resentment from anyone near him, save possibly his wife. Even Jack might have been just a drunk to a wife.

The four of us used to drive in the dead of winter in my Simplex down to Long Beach at night; bundled in fur coats, my chauffeur doing the driving, as that would have interfered with my holding Katharine's hand. Jack never thought of anything like that. Poor Nell, I'm afraid, was bored with these parties, for Jack would generally be asleep. We had to stop at every other roadhouse on the drive down to let Jack off to get a drink and vice versa. I asked him why he never danced with Katharine, who always was whisked away on the dance floor by some man or other. He said:

"Unless I could be the best goddamned dancer in the world, I wouldn't dance!"

I rarely danced myself. If I could have danced alone like Ray Bolger can dance. . . . Ah, that would be something!

Once Jack was really on the wagon one whole week.

"Jack," I told him, "you have been so charming and wonderful, as a companion, in this one week. . . . I wish you would lay off the licker for . . . *two* weeks!" Every now and then Jack and Katharine stayed all night with us, and once at a big party Nell threw, Jack got away with all the Scotch we had; and there was plenty. I found him surrounded by men. He was sit-

ting down and explaining with gestures and psychology and anthropology just why people danced—and his audience was roaring with glee.

In the middle of the early morning while the rest of us were still in bed, Jack, not finding any more liquor, drank an eight-ounce bottle of spirits of peppermint he found in the bathroom.

Later in Hollywood I saw quite a lot of Jack. When I had first gone into his bungalow he said:

"Monty, I want you to meet the only pure woman west of the Rockies!"

He waved at his horrible little monkey in a cottage-like wicker cage the Warner Bros. had built for it.

People that Jack was particularly fond of he called "Mikey," regardless of sex and in one case, of breed, for he called a big dirty vulture "Mikey," used to take his whole beak in his mouth. Jack would go into his aviary and sit on a stool among his tropical birds and feed worms to them. Of all the gay little birds that came flying to his shoulder one was his special care—a one-legged little thing.

Brownie and I drove out to "the lot" one time to see Jack, who was doing some scenes of *Don Juan*. I hadn't seen him for a long time, and when they sent for him a crazy figure in a tattered monk's robe, frowsy long blond hair and stringy beard, waving a staff, came galloping down a hill in the sunset dust calling, "Monty!" and embraced me as always.

"What in hell are you supposed to be?" I said.

He took a pose,

"Behold in me a desiccated Christ!"

He liked that ragged-looking getup better than his costume in the earlier scenes when he was in elegant tights, slashed sleeves and a short, tight-curved yellow wig and huge pearl earring. He hated those "pansy parts," as he called them. When his shades were down in his bungalow quarters it meant that he was "in conference with a banker with a long white beard!" This was Dolores.

He said once, possibly in reply to some mild remonstrance from me:

"I know of course that my looks are an asset to me. I'm not dull enough to pretend otherwise. If I find that drinking is doing something harsh to my features, I can stop—just like that!"

But he never did.

I am a hound about beauty, men, women or children, landscapes, books or music, anything, anywhere, anytime. I will admit my favorite form of beauty is woman's—if you pin me down. To me Jack, from any angle, had great masculine beauty. I can't remember any man that was handsomer. I would say that my zany friend Hal Phyfe, the photographer, was *as* handsome. I have drawn and painted them both.

In whatever role Jack played he was great. A great scholar, a great actor, a great occultist, a great drinker, a great swordsman, a great conversationalist, a great companion, a great wit and a great "gent." He had as many brilliant facets as a fly's eye. But he was a lousy artist. He couldn't draw for nuts! He had a factitious flair for wormy warlocks and parboiled poltergeists and such; but only the very ignorant, like editors, businessmen and moving picture producers thought he was an artist.

I spoke of Jack's making me up as the Devil for my first Dutch Treat play. He insisted upon showing me how it should be done at a rehearsal in my studio. He was of course tight as a tick when he started to show me. I had had a wig made according to his directions, with black hair and two short pink horns, so I put it on and sat under a bright spotlight. Jack sat in another chair, a demoniac gleam in his eyes and a pair of sharp shears in his hands. He explained that he had learned his art from Chaliapin, the master of makeup. So he sat glaring at me with a grin, scissors rampant. Said he, through clenched teeth:

"It must be mangy, that wig—" making a jab and gouging out a hunk of hair. He kept jabbing at my wig and snipping, muttering the while in an ecstasy of creation, "Ah! good—a bit more off here... another scrap... here. Ah! now it's coming... there... there..."

Meanwhile I sat frozen, thinking to myself, "I wonder if he's going to gouge my eyes out—is this his Machiavellian method of revenge . . . on account of Katharine? . . . Jesus! I mustn't move. The man is mad!"

The muttering went on, with the jabs of the scissors and falling hair:

"Christ! You're beautiful. You're *lousy*."

At last I could relax. It was finished. Then I put on the chin beard—no mustache—and he painted the corners of my eyes with liquid aluminum and outlined them with black. I put on the pink fleshings and strapped on the pink rattail and slipped on the patent leather pumps and the black cloak. As he surveyed his work, Jack roared with satisfaction.

He was so enthusiastic about this show he wanted to put on an act in it. I wish he had. His idea was to do a nance tramp going through the manual of arms with a toy musket to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw." It would have been a riot. But at the last minute he reneged, saying he didn't have time to rehearse it thoroughly, and that only amateurs thought you could put on a good act without rehearsal. Jack always knew his theater.

But he and Katharine sneaked in and watched the show from a balcony in the ballroom of Delmonico's.

I want to underline the fact that in spite of Jack's drinking, he had something that transcended this obvious weakness, that shone through the unhappy fumes like a sunrise through mist. People who loved him know that. Great in spite of grog.

I have a great sword, like Excalibur, standing in a corner of my studio. Jack used it in some "Richard" show. A jittery and lovely Katharine brought this sword to my studio one morning and begged me to keep it. It seems that Jack, brandishing this sword, had chased her in her nightgown all over the apartment building, banging on apartment doors shouting: "I want my wife!", and that she finally escaped into Gramercy Park and appealed to a policeman who promptly tried to "make" her. The danger of being beautiful. I have known some beauti-

ful women who were not "photogenic"—which is always a surprise. I think it is because the camera is mindless. Katharine was one of these women. In her photos and snaps she was nothing. But in reality . . . irresistible! Lovely! So much so I wanted to draw her all the time. She had a lovely figure, or blueprints for same, a bit too skinny for my taste, but wide-shouldered, willowy—beautiful ends. But her face—enthalling!

Lionel Barrymore is a real artist. Jack, besides his great love for him as he should, had the greatest respect for his brother as an artist. Two men couldn't have been more different. And the wonderful "Big Ethel" as we called her. If she wrote her life, the title couldn't be "That's All There Is. . . ." There would always be more.

Jack was attracted toward the Unseen World. His being bemused by witches and werewolves and goblins shows one aspect of this interest. He lived in superlatives, like a melodrama. We were both agreeably astonished that each of us was a friend and admirer of Jeddu Krishnamurti, or Krishna, as we called him.

I met Krishna when he was a lad of twelve in London. He was a protégé of Annie Besant's, who claimed he was the Second Coming of Christ. Krishna was educated in Oxford and sounded like an Englishman when you didn't look at him. I was enthusiastic about this young Indian, this Brahmin. He was like nobody else in this world. Mrs. Besant was an amazing woman. Bernard Shaw was in love with her once, if that means anything much. I don't think it does, but it sort of gives you an inkling about . . . both of them. They were two of the great World People; brains, spirit, all that sort of rot. The world would have been so much stupider without them.

I once heard Mrs. Besant answer the Bishop of London, in the Little Queen's Hall in London, when he accused Theosophy of being anti-Christian. That austere, white-robed, short-grey-haired woman took the Bishop apart very calmly and logically, in a workmanlike manner, and left him dangling in mid-air. I suppose you might say—who couldn't? I personally

couldn't be a Theosophist. I have seen the breed. They look like people who feed pigeons out of paper bags in the Park. They are just as screwy as Holy Rollers, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Catholics—fanatics. Everybody else is wrong.

Annie Besant brought Krishna to New York. And as I was fond of the lad I went to Kent Cooper, head of the Associated Press, to ask him for a decent bit of publicity. Krishna had been touted in the Untouchable Tabloids as an "untouchable," so much so that when I walked down Fifth with him he had to beg me to get him into a taxi since the females pestered him so. As time marched on he couldn't take it any more and renounced Theosophy and Annie Besant's billing him as "the New Jesus," although he always called her "mother." People backed him, believed in him, gave him a castle in Ommen, Holland, a home in Ojai, California, and saw to it that he didn't want. Women chased him, as he was a beautiful little fellow. I painted a portrait of him sitting on a rock in his Indian robes, in Ojai Valley, which he said reminded him of the Valley of Cashmere in India. He impressed me with his sincerity and, as I said, he was the only holy man I ever met. I mean holy all across the board; even physically. He denied himself all the fleshly desires, meat, licker, and women. His weaknesses were being a plus-two man in golf, and driving a car at ninety miles per. And his wonderful sense of humor.

His theory was that he gave only aloof affection. This, I think, was quite a chore, as he was, naturally an affectionate man.

He liked me, I believe, because I treated him like an ordinary human being for whom I had respect and affection. I asked him once if he ever met Kipling in India. He laughed and said:

"He wouldn't meet me—he would look upon me as a nigger."

That shocked me, knowing of course that Indians are Aryan. (Whatever that means. At least it means non-Ethiopian.) But the British in India do class Indians as "niggers."

Here was this young Brahmin; rated, as I found out later,

as India's number one philosopher, being classed by the British as a "nigger."

Jack called me one day at the Ambassador and said:

"Come on over—I'm having Krishnaji"—meaning Mr. Krishnamurti—"to tea."

"Good God!" I said. "Do you know him too?"

I was met by Jack at his door, obviously licked.

"But Jackie," I said, "Krishna hates lick."

"Think nothing of it," Jack said, "Krishna says some of his best friends are drunks."

Jack felt the same reverence for this wonderful person that I did. It amazed me.

When I was painting Krishna at Ojai I ran out of Chinese white, and Krishna sent his gardener, Peter, to Ventura to get some more. Peter came back without it and was sent back. Later we saw the car returning and Krishna said:

"Ah! the Second Coming of Peter!"

I wondered when I painted his portrait if he'd wear a turban. He didn't. His follower Rajagopal told me that Krishna never wore turbans; that only actors and maharajahs and people like that wore them. Krishna's books and lectures were to me so esoteric I couldn't understand them. I think a lot of people pretended to, so that they could smile superciliously—the way some people do about modern art. Most people, I am positive, are no wiser than I. But Krishna didn't talk shop. He'd answer questions on abstruse matters epigrammatically. We passed a pair of pansies as we walked down Fifth one day. They weren't the obvious sods, but there is an unmistakable tone in the voices of those queer birds and I think the word "petulance" exactly fits it.

"Krishna," I said, "what makes pansies?"

"Lack of control," he answered immediately.

And to a query of mine, "What is God?", he said, "Man purified."

Answers like those will bear pondering. He didn't like publicity and dressed like a young American. It was a trial to him

that his skin was so dark. But he was strikingly handsome, and how he loved to laugh! One of the most unusual men, and one of the most attractive. He used always to call me when he arrived in New York from India, but I'm sorry I haven't seen him in several years. I sometimes took him to dine at the Lotos Club and a number of my friends enjoyed chatting with this cultivated young philosopher.

I acted as an escort to Krishna from here to California one time when he came to America, and in his little party was a maharanee; the head of the woman movement in India. She was young and beautiful and wore native dress. She spoke English, as Krishna did, with no trace of any accent but English. At that hell-hole of heat, Needles, California, we got out for a stretch and I took a snapshot of the maharanee standing on the track which included in the background one of the blowsy, fat, dirty Navajo squaws who sell turquoise and silver junk to tourists. The contrast was marvelous—the Two Indians. Later on in Ojai it was fun to watch the maharanee dashing madly on a tennis court, in her long white silk thingmajig down to her ankles. She must have known it was a silly thing to play tennis in, but she made a delightfully beautiful and foolish figure. I'll bet she knew that, too.

The Society of Illustrators for years put on a spring show for their fellow members and friends at whatever hall or little theater they could get for a night. I was merely one of the audience for years, enjoying the gatherings and the bawdy shows; and they were pretty funny and pretty ribald. Then somehow I got into the producing and writing and acting end of it with Charlie Falls, C. Allan Gilbert, Jack Sheridan, George Kerr, Charlie Williams, Wallace Morgan and Frank Godwin and, later on, Dean Cornwell. Marc Connelly wrote and acted in some of his funniest skits for us. Frank Godwin, Arthur William Brown and Charlie Williams were always in the skits I wrote.

As time went on the spirit of the spring flights began to change and instead of the frankly amateur shows done just for



With his best friend, John Barrymore: "As many-faceted as a fly's eye."



The last phase of the Great Guy, 1941, Hollywood

our own amusement the Broadway Itch developed, with a desire for bigger and more professional productions, and the shrewd Shuberts were brought into the background. I made myself very unpopular by strenuously objecting to this. It came to a head at the opening of our now noted *three day revue*. It had been one of our enjoyments to read the reviews the morning following our old-time shows, the regular critics entering into the fun of the thing. Once the Shuberts took an interest, they forbade our having dramatic critics. I had a half dozen seats for myself that opening night, so I gave them to my friends the dramatic critics. I was so disgusted at the whole situation that I determined to do even more. I hung around backstage, much to the uneasiness of people who sensed I was up to something. I waited until the curtain had come down for the intermission.

Before they could stop me, which some of them tried to do, I managed to squirm out in front of the lowered curtain. Some of the audience had already started up the aisles, but I halted them. They turned and faced me. I knew the Shubert boys were seated in the front row right below and I addressed them in a couple of doggerel verses I had written for the occasion, in which I told them my attitude and my admiration for their business acumen in producing our "Artists and Models," at a royalty rate of only *one per cent*. I heard they made much money out of the Shubertized Broadway version of the show, which they produced later that year.

There was a playlet I had written in the original show called "The Critic" in which I had the hump-backed critic garroted with Christmas ribbons. Harry Gribble so altered my script in the Broadway production that I didn't recognize it. In fact the only word of mine that was left was "bastard."

The next morning's papers had quite an account of the affair, including interviews with outraged members of the society who disavowed any agreement with my views. Many members wouldn't speak to me for a while. At a Friar's dinner given to Nellie Revell the next night at the Astor, celebrating her

partial recovery from her fight with death as the result of a broken spine, Willie Collier and George M. Cohan thanked me for what I had "done to the Shuberts"! I explained I had "done" nothing to them, since my criticism was directed entirely at the Society of Illustrators.

I remember my father was sitting directly in front of Dana Gibson and his wife the opening night when I burst out in front of the curtain. The Gibsons evidently had not recognized Dad and Mrs. Gibson said to Dana with deep disgust:

"Jimmy Flagg's drunk again!"

I didn't happen to be.

The society was having a dinner at the Brevoort in honor of the incoming president, Denny Wortman; and Wallace Morgan, outgoing president, had a brainstorm and sent Frank Godwin up to ask me to come to the dinner and rib the society; the sky, according to Wally, was the limit.

I was astonished at such a request but Frank assured me, laughing, that Wally and the gang really meant just that. I need hardly say I went to town and took the afternoon off to write my speech. I was highly amused at its reception—hisses, catcalls, cheers, handclapping—all mixed.

In that period there was also the Periodical Publishers' Association; a fabulous organization of happy memory. It was made up of all the big magazine publishers, and every spring they threw a party—a party that artists and writers were very glad to be invited to, since each publisher had a limited number of guests he could invite. Breaths were held, and if a beautifully engraved invitation came in the mail, you exhaled with satisfaction. Everybody that was well-known in journalism, literature and illustration was a guest, and they chartered a private train, holding about four hundred guests and their hosts, that took off for a different city each year. I missed the first one, to Lakewood, N.J., the trip that helped to build the legend of the conviviality of Booth Tarkington.

On that trip to Lakewood, nobody feeling any remote twinges of discomfort, Tark on a trip down the aisles was

asked by his guide if he had ever met Colonel Mann. He said he had never met him but would like to. They came to Colonel Mann, who looked like a vicious Santa Claus in a top hat, sitting alone. The guide pointed rudely.

"That is Colonel Mann, Tark!"

Tark smiled and asked the publisher of the scandal sheet *Town Topics*: "Are you, indeed, Colonel Mann?"

The Colonel smiled and acknowledged his identity.

"That," smiled Tark, "is all I want to know!" He smashed the Colonel's top hat down way past his earlobes, and weaved gaily on. So that you will not for a moment feel any sympathy for the mauled Colonel, I may say that this elegant old man was beyond peradventure one of the most noisome and vicious blackmailers ever to avoid a jail sentence, which *Collier's* of the Golden Age proved lavishly in their weekly.

According to report, Tark had only started, and later at the hotel he added to the hilarity of the occasion by diving into the lobby fountain in his pajamas. I like to think it's true.

Tark was cured of these youthful escapades by none other than Eros himself. The beautiful Susanna would not marry him until he had ridden consecutively for three years on the old water wagon, so the tale goes. At any rate he booked his seat and stayed with it for three years (nor has he touched a drop since), and they were married and lived happily ever after.

One afternoon when Tark and Susanna drove up from Kennebunkport, where his summer house was, to see me at Biddeford Pool, where mine was, we were chatting on the lawn from which Old Orchard can hazily be seen five miles across Saco Bay. Old Orchard, from once having been a fashionable summer resort many decades before, had degenerated into a cheap small Coney Island. He took me aside out of earshot of "the ladies" and whispered that he had finally doped out what the smell of Old Orchard was.

"It is fried perspiration" he explained.

One of the most pathetic impulses of Americans is their urge to form clubs. I think it's a form of infantilism springing from

an inferiority complex; a fear of loneliness and a desire to expand the little ego. So they get together and they they think, "Gosh, we're wonderful, grand guys all...but we're only us ...let's get some more members."

Then the club begins to swell, I mean smell! Each generation ought to have its own club. Only old men are enamored of tradition. That's all they have. The new generation smiles pityingly and pats the oldsters on the back and says, "Sure, you were wonderful, Pappyl!" Then they drift over to their own crowd and order drinks...the rotation of craps. And *the same thing* will one day happen to *them*! Thoughtless, vain. Youth!

Be that as it may, we formed the Artists and Writers Golf Association. Charlie Williams and I went over the list about ten years after the club had been founded and discovered "artists and writers" were just fifty per cent of the membership. The other half was anything but. All professional clubs are like that. They start off seriously to gather people of their own profession, and such is the nature of clubs it isn't long before that particular profession is a small minority.

Ah—so *wot*? They're good guys—give us three more double Scotches and plain water—oh! *one* soda! Step on it waiter—the troops are scorched! Club life.

Well, the Artists and Writers are swell guys. Sure to be. There's Ol' Granny Rice, from Georgia. I think there is a case of a man who didn't love Granny. It was because he had never seen Granny on account of he'd spent his entire life in an institution for the Incompetent. Granny is the President. He doesn't do anything about it except to make some jerk friend a member whenever he gets the notion without consulting the Board of Governors or the Rules. And he gets away with it. Just because he's old man Rice, which is a nice thing to be if you want your fellow man to think you can do no wrong.

John Golden is the Chairman because he insists upon it and loves to listen to himself. He playfully threatens to resign, knowing that no one could count on it. He has no features at

all except beautiful eyes. He can screw his puss up in such a threatening manner he looks exactly like John L. Lewis. I enrage him by calling him a fat Eddie Cantor. Golden tells dirty stories and produces clean plays. His stories are much funnier than his plays, but he has made staggering wads of cash. He gets no fun out of it, however, as he spends most of his time in bed . . . alone.

He buys lovely clothes but no one knows why, for he is seldom in them. He loves to be the head of committees that entertain the armed forces. He still has his first nickel. Ask any actor. He is veddy important. He is Mr. Broadway. Ask him! He calls all the famous people in the world by their first names. He calls me Monty. He and I have always liked each other. Anyhow he has. I don't like him, I love him! John and I, being the oldest members of the club, have an annual custom when we arrive at Palm Beach on the club's annual trip. We solemnly lie down on a bed (we don't care what bed) and according to what year our combined ages add up to we say in unison:

"On this bed is one hundred and thirty-six years!" or whatever the total happens to be.

John, being of the theater, always said one of us would die if we failed to perform this ritual. Bum sport—betting on a sure thing!

For at least eighteen years previous to the start of World War II our gang took over Palm Beach for ten days, generally in the last part of February. We got a spot of a rake-off because we were blood brothers of the Press and we were able to pass off the magazine editors in the group as "writers." The cartoonists present were considered even more holy; more important than educated people. We had more fun at the old Ponciana with its Victorian settings, its rocking chairs, its matting on the floors, than we ever did in later years at more up-to-date hostelries like the magnificent Breakers.

I don't know if any of the mob felt as strongly as I did about the midwinter trip. I looked forward to it as a child counts the days to Christmas: seeing my friends on the train, getting

drunk together, and getting off the train into balmy air—after leaving stark cold winter behind. It was pretty near heaven, *with* your friends. But without your friends . . . it would mean nothing.

A complicated and absorbing pattern is friendship. But to simplify it . . . it all doesn't matter if you see an answering sympathetic smile and you subconsciously say:

"Pal . . . you would defend me from hell!"

The Artists and Writers; the long walk through the hotel corridors with bellhops carrying bags and smiling at you sideways in remembrance of other years; then the pairing off into double rooms, generally with special pals; a bath and a shave and a change into sport clothes and down to a wonderful breakfast. At those moments women don't count: they matter at other times, but never in this clean male joy I'm writing of. If you found a letter waiting from your sweetheart . . . it would be a discordant note! Am I talking true, me buckos? Later on in the story it'll be different of course—you'll begin worrying if a letter doesn't come. *But not now*, this first day—thank God! You can be *really* happy for a couple of hours.

One of the crowd was Arthur McKeogh, who was art editor of the *Satevepost* for some time, because Lorimer sent for him and asked him if he knew anything about art and he said not a thing, so Lorimer said that's fine—you are the new art editor. Arthur had only a fifth of his stomach left, so a small number of drinks put him right out, and when we arrived at Palm Beach he always had to call for two porters—one for his bags and one for himself. The other four-fifths of his stomach stayed in France in World War I, in which he and Major Whittlesey were the only two men left out of the Lost Battalion. One time at the Homestead in Virginia, when our gang went there, Arthur called up General Pershing, also a guest, at three A.M. and apologized for losing the Lost Battalion. We understood that Pershing was very nice about it and courteously accepted Arthur's apology.

Rube Goldberg broke through the Golden Gate and escaped

from San Francisco years ago, about the same time some other famous people did, like Will and Wallace Irwin, Gelett Burgess, Arnold Genthe and John O'Hara Cosgrave. Rube is famous the world over for his failures. He can't draw and his inventions never work. The difference between Rube and Thurber is that Rube's "drawings" are determinedly awful but Thurber's are childish in an effortless way. Rube's kindly, though mocking, grin and his favorite four-letter word have endeared him to his friends. I used to annoy him—I hope—by calling him a "100% American." This was because he believes fiercely in the things Fourth of July orators say. He appointed himself Perpetual Master of Ceremonies for our meetings. It seemed satisfactory. His style was, "You can take it—and like it!" We did both. I could always catch him—he'd forget the gag in between times—by saying seriously:

"Rube, I always say there is one nice thing about you." He'd wait with modest grin. Then I'd add, "It's Irma." (That's his wife.)

Leon Gordon, the Russian painter, and I pub-crawled one whole night dragging Rube Goldberg from bar to bar in an effort to prove to him that he wasn't an artist. Rube was hopeless about it. His contention was that anyone who made a mark on a piece of paper, which anyone else could recognize as meaning something, was an artist. Rube is so modern. I am fond of cartoonists. They are a very intelligent race of men, except that they have a curious complex. They all think they can draw. They are quite sincere in this delusion, even to the point of calling their offices "studios." And they have models; which is very nice. There are really only about a half dozen cartoonists in the world who can draw, and David Low is at least four or five of them. In America, next to baseball, Comics or Funnies have become the most popular of our obsessions. I am looked upon as a leper because I dislike both of these things. I can hardly wait on Sunday mornings to get the papers so that I can take the funnies and stuff them in the

scrapbasket. Naturally there is something wrong with me—130,000,000 people can't be that wrong. Maybe.

In later years our train from New York arrived in the late afternoon and Arthur Hand, of the Colony Club, met us with a big open truck and a band; and, what was even more welcome, Scotch highballs clinking. A bunch of us would climb aboard and drive to the Colony for more highballs and laughs before going over to the Breakers where our bags had preceded us.

Many parties were given for us by people who had big villas, and in those ten days we practically took over Palm Beach. Sober people were looked on with suspicion bordering on incredulity. There were anywhere from forty to sixty members on these jaunts, and the night before the end of our stay we gave a parting banquet to which we invited our hosts and hostesses. We did our stunts and gave out prizes for the golf tournament, which were very elaborate at one period. The first prize one year was a trip to Paris on the *Ile de France*. Mo Collette (who has a mad passion for old ladies) won this one, and he wired his wife, who, since the prize was only good for one passage, was not included, wired him back, "What a break for the *Ile de France*."

Our favorite host and fellow member was, of course, Messmore Kendall, who always entertained us lavishly at his villa on the lake. I think Gilbert White was Messmore's favorite person, as Gilbert was of so many people. But Messmore did things about it, turning over town houses or apartments to Gilbert and his wife whenever they came to America. One winter I was delighted and surprised to get a phone call from Gib. He had arrived in Palm Beach to paint some portraits and he said he had "his current wife" with him.

Gib lived in Paris and was famous there as a wit. He was a liaison officer overseas in World War I, for he spoke French like a Parisian. Besides, he was extremely wise. He was an extra special person who made a sort of fetish of marrying pretty women. In addition to his devastating wit he had a fine brain.

He knew more about art than most of us, but he also did less about it. He never painted anything stupid nor anything brilliant. He wore the "*Légion d'honneur*" ribbon, which points my criticism. He was bubbling with humor always. When he was told that his first beautiful wife (I think it was his first, but it's hard to keep track of them all) had gone to France as a nurse during the World War, he gallantly proclaimed:

"I regret that I have only one wife to give to my country!"

At a party once someone called his attention to an old friend who had married a rich elderly woman, saying:

"You're wrong, Gib—he really loves her. See, he is caressing her hand."

"No," answered Gib—"he is caressing her diamonds."

At one of our big banquets some stupid crowd, eager for a momentary distinction, gave out the news of Gib's death. It killed the party.

Joe Hergesheimer is an attractive gent. My chief recollection of him is that he seemed always to be playing backgammon with Mary Brown Warburton, familiarly called "Brown." I told him after sketching him that he looked like Hoover with a Soul. Brown had a butler, a young Englishman, who took Hergesheimer to task about his novels. Joe loved it. His *Soirées de Palm Beach* are so curiously trenchant and true. Mary Brown Warburton was a real playgirl, a granddaughter of Wanamaker, and she just lived for fun. I used to call her Statue of Liberty, as she was huge and handsome. She would call me at three in the morning and say:

"Put your pants on, Monty, and come right over—I have the grandest gang here."

I told her to sit on a cactus. This was when she had one of those brownstone houses on Madison Ave., opposite the tradesmen's entrance to the Cathedral. She showed me her bathroom: a great, tall room, papered to the ceiling with front-page scare heads of newspapers that publicized the beatings that Peter Arno took in barrooms. As she explained, she only loved three men, Jack Barrymore, Peter Arno and me.

My friend Al Pach had joined our Artists and Writers, because he was a photographer, and in a letter I got from Ilse Hoffmann she said: "Give my love to the Pachyderm."

I remembered having told Ilse about Mary Brown and how big she was, and I thought she was referring to her. I delivered the message to Mary just as it was written. I found out later Ilse was alluding to Al Pach. Ilse wasn't as jealous as I thought.

I took Mary, as my guest, to one of our banquets and some kind friend got her on the phone from Nassau and told her that Peter Arno had married somebody or other. Mary was fit to be tied. She made a holy show of herself and I had to give up the party and take her home. Beauty, money and remote control—and a grand gall

Someone proposed Ray Schindler for membership to our mob. They consulted me, as a governor, and I wrote them my approval and suggested there should be a detective in our club if only to detect *one* artist or writer. They took me seriously and now the old son-of-a-gun is a member! It would be pretty difficult to find anyone more clubable.

One of my best friends is Elbert McGran Jackson, of Augusta, Georgia. I rarely see him nowadays, which is the case with most of my best friends. Some I don't see because they're dead; others are practically dead. I am old enough to be the father of most of my pals, because I don't enjoy people my own age. As a rule they're shot and wrung out. "Jack" would go with me when I drove south, and we'd wind up in Augusta or Atlanta where he had a lot of kin like the true Southerner he was. He had cousins in most every city in the South, and we could stop off anywhere and cadge a dinner. It was always either partridge or quail (they use those words interchangeably down there because they don't know that they are two different birds), and dropped biscuits, Smithfield ham a dozen years old, beaten biscuits and scallions, hominy pone—things you can't get in hotels. They serve Vermont turkey and *sweetened* cornbread in southern *hotels*. All Jack's relatives were in cotton and drank like trout.

I think Jack's father or uncle didn't feel right well, so the doctor made him quit drinkin'—put him on a diet of a quart a day. The "corn" I got down there was pretty nasty stuff. They couldn't wait for it to age in a charred barrel, so at dinner parties, in order to be correct, they'd have a miniature charred keg on the table, pour the white mule in it and draw it off immediately.

Jack and I were sitting in a drugstore window in his home town having refreshments one time; and it was something like the little sweets shop on the Via Tuornaboni in Florence, Italy, where it was the fashion for the smart people to foregather at a certain hour. I drew Jack's attention to a young couple approaching.

"Why," I asked, "does that beautiful girl walk with that man who looks like somebody who looks after furnaces?"

"Because she is his wife," Jack said. This rather shabby-looking guy was the owner of one of the biggest mills in the South.

This combination of beauty and the beast was prevalent down south—not sporadic. In reading Plato I think I discovered the answer. The women of a conquered race become more beautiful and the men more common-looking. Generalizations are of course merely.

Jackson had a pet aunt, a lady who could carry on a complete conversation with the use of only two words: "Uh-huh." She could twist the inflections to mean many things. But Jack was very sore at the time because she failed to invite us to stay at her house. It was such a breach of southern hospitality that her nephew was outraged and ashamed of her. He went to lengths about it.

It seemed that her pretty, spoiled daughter was home and she could think and talk of nothing else: how the child's beaux were rushing her, and how their parked cars extended completely around the block. She was having some rooms repainted. All this meant nothing whatever to her nephew. He begged me to help him get back at her. We thought up re-

venge. I was to do a cartoon. We bought art materials, went to our room at the hotel, I made the drawing and we marched down to the leading newspaper. This was rather late at night, but the editors, knowing who Jackson was and only too glad to stir up a spot of excitement, agreed to print it on the front page the following morning. I had not signed it, but one of the editors said to Jack:

"By God, sir, that looks like a Flagg pen and ink!"

Jack admitted that it was, and much laughter followed. There was much to do in the town the next day when it appeared. Jack was tickled pink at how mad his aunt was. For once she apparently said something besides "Uh-huh."

E. McGran Jackson is a distinguished-looking, youngish man and gets odd satisfaction out of being mistaken for the ex-King of Spain. He has that prognathous jaw. He was a brilliant architect but that didn't count, for he would be brilliant in anything he undertook. So he switched from architecture to cover-designing for mags, and later became an illustrator for the *Cosmopolitan*. When we first began taking these winter (called "winna" in Georgia) trips, he had just had his first couple of covers on the *Satevepost* and a consequent spot of local *r clame* in Georgia. When we slid up to a hotel after a day's drive "down under," I'd let him go sign the register while I took care of the car. We weren't getting particularly desirable rooms or service, I began to notice, and I smelled a rat. I looked him sternly in the eye and said:

"Jack, young feller me lad, just how do you sign the register? I want the truth!"

Then he admitted it with humorous simplicity:

"I have signed them Elbert McGran Jackson, and underneath J. M. Flagg."

"I thought so!" I returned grimly. "But from now on see what happens if you reverse proceedings, aye?"

Thereafter he signed his own name in initials under my full-rigged monicker and we got better rooms and service. In one instance at the Atlanta Biltmore we got the bridal suite with

no charge, and four bellhops in the full uniform of the Royal Hungarian Bazooka saluted and craved an autograph each in their lovely little plush-bound albums. I gave Jackson a dirty smile. The moral is . . . "Never force modesty on a realist."

We stopped at my favorite Hotel Jefferson in Richmond one time. Jack, being a somnolent Southerner, is difficult to arouse in the morning. When I tried I got nothing but burbles and grunts. An idea occurred to me. I went downstairs and sent him a telegram reading:

"Hotel on fire. Love and kisses, Richmond Fire Department."

He got up.

Jack would feel uncomfortably naked without his tube of mustachewax; even in a foxhole. Although he doesn't care for people, he has, paradoxically, a sure social instinct and he can, with the greatest of ease, and without the innocent dopes being aware of what's happening, make an occasion out of an impossible gathering. He did just that for me once at a wedding breakfast. I was the fall guy. He was the answer to the postulate, "When a feller needs a friend!"

He realized what a lousy game the once distinguished profession of illustration was turning into, and made plans, against the day old-timers who could draw without photos would be given the bum's rush, to retire as country gents. He thought in large terms; if he was going to build a garage, it would be something like the Taj Mahal.

His first project of trying to design and build all the radio sets in the world flopped. Then he bought a million-dollar estate at Montauk for a large sum and started raising asparagus with Hollandaise sauce and tomatoes *surprise*. Next he switched to raising chickens for the entire U. S. Navy, but something happened after a while—I think he counted them prematurely. Then he got gaily into debt without knowing how to spell the word, but Elbert McGran Jackson is still dreaming as he walks on the ceiling of his studio. He woke his wife up long enough to have beautiful twin girls and then she went right back to sleep again. He just laughs and says:

"That's the way Connie is. She comes from one of the best and sleepest families in Georgia!"

I could never persuade him to join our mob on our Palm Beach vacs. How he was ever graduated from Georgia Tech is a mystery, for he has never read a book. I think "Artists and Writers" should be changed to "Artists *and* Readers."

At an Authors' League banquet once, Sinclair Lewis said, "I want you to meet my wife. Wait here and I'll find her!" He scurried off in the crowd and presently came back with his wife—his first wife. I started to shake hands with her (Emily Post shudders) and Mrs. Lewis put her hands behind her and said severely, "I never shake hands with men!" I made some idiotic reply, smiled at Sinclair, and walked away. I wonder what he said to *her*. Later I asked Frank Crowninshield who Mrs. Lewis thought she was.

"She's one of the fifty editors of *Vogue*," Frank said, "or actually a receptionist; sits behind a desk in the hall and sends in names of callers. She's a celebrity gazer. She's probably seen you when you came in to see me. They keep her on because she can tell the difference between Mrs. Oelrichs and Mrs. Vanderbilt at fifty paces."

Tom Wells, one-time editor of Harper & Brothers, at one of these Authors' League shindigs was describing an experience at a first night in which Mrs. Dana Gibson, who had been at our table a few minutes before, was rather curt with him in a mixup in regard to seats. Tom laughed with a touch of remembered resentment, saying:

"I guess she didn't know who I was!"

"Well, Tommy, who were you?" I earnestly inquired.

Once I was in a heated discussion with some people and a girl came up and butted in saying with an ingratiating smile:

"Mr. Flagg, may I pay you a compliment?"

"Yes," I retorted, "if you make it snappy."

Such is the gentle art of adding to one's list of enemies.

9. AUTOS AND HOLLYWOOD

I FIRST BEGAN being a motorist about 1909 or '10, and had a funny lot of chauffeurs and some cars that were equally funny; especially the first, a secondhand Thomas Flier. The chauffeur with that buggy was a half-breed Injun who could take the car apart and put it together again, which he did. He had enough parts left over afterwards to make a lawn mower. One summer my chauffeur was a good-natured, good-looking lad, Joe Dunphy, a Nova Scotia Blue-Nose. On the night of our arrival at Biddeford Pool he put the car away and took a walk with a lantern over the moors in the rain. He said a cat followed him and annoyed him so he kicked it. Then he came down the hill from the garage to the house.

"Get out of here quick," I said, "—and bury your clothes!" I think maybe they don't have forest angoras in Nova Scotia.

I had quite a number of cars through the decades, for I was keen on driving. Sports and games didn't interest me; nor did they Bernard Shaw. I bought a Columbia Silent Knight one year, and on my first trip in it going up a long driveway to a friend's house in Irvington it didn't go fast enough to suit me. I was disgusted. I had paid \$4,500 for it. I voiced my disgust to Nell.

"Why don't you get the best car?" she said.

I cheered up at once. I sold the Columbia the next day and bought a Simplex, at \$6,200, and that was a joy. Those were

the "chain drive" days. I liked the racket the chains made, and in the woods it especially thrilled me with the echoed sound of power. When it was delivered to me, painted a primrose yellow, Julian Street and I took the big Simplex on its maiden trip up to Maine, dividing the driving and wallowing in satisfaction at its performance and in the knowledge that it was the swankiest car in America at that time. We wrote verses about its superiority to all other makes, which were printed, and for years afterwards we would find copies of these libelous verses tacked up on garage doors throughout the country. Julian had a racing Locomobile stripped of fenders and windshield in which he would roar through the *main streets* of Greenwich, Conn., at 60 *m.p.h.* And this was in 1912! But he was forced to bow to the superiority of my Simplex.

Those were the days of linen dusters and fur-edged goggles and foul roads. When it took two and a half days to go 375 miles from New York to Biddeford Pool, Maine, on account of the bursting tires every twenty-five miles. It was a common sight to see the ditches spotted with cars, their drivers lying underneath them repairing pipes and gadgets, or changing tires. "Git a horse!" You had to get out at sunset and light your headlights with a match. And many an arm was broken while cranking the car. When World War I came on I had to take on two more aunts to support, so I had to sell my beloved Simplex for \$500 to a young army officer; and as I saw my pride and joy being driven off by its new owner, I took the name of our Lord in vain.

After the war I couldn't resist having a car again. I got a two-seater sporty car called the Kissel, and thereafter I purchased a new one each year until I had had fourteen in all. Finally I decided in 1924 on a motor drive to California for a vacation.

To drive across the continent in '24 was a fairly tough mission, especially to a motorist who had confined himself to the Ideal Tours of New England. The roads beyond Kansas City were mostly trails, chuckholes, alkali draws or mud. But I



Jean Harlow sat for Flagg; Bill Powell wasn't
far away



The lovely kid, Dolores Costello, was Flagg's model

wouldn't have missed the adventure—nor would I do it again in spite of greatly improved roads of today.

I wrote a book about it called *Boulevards All the Way—Maybe!* I spent some weeks as a guest of my dear pardner Bill Hart in Hollywood. If you want to read a fascinating story of the life of the greatest Western star, get Bill's *My Life—East and West*.

Later my oldest friend, Arthur William Brown, and I went out by train to Hollywood two seasons on end just for fun. We didn't want anything they had; which may have been the reason we were *persona grata*. We traveled with huge kit bags clanking with Scotch, and *that* didn't last too long. This was in Prohibition days or "the Covered Flagon" as we called it. In the six weeks we stayed at the Ambassador we had two evenings when we weren't invited out, and were we irked and resentful! To wind things up we gave a party in the Coconut Grove for the stars who had entertained us. Otto Kahn was throwing a dinner the same night and had to be content with a tableful of beautiful blonde \$7.50's, since we had all the stars, including Beverly Nichols. He had been one of Kahn's guests on a 10,000-mile de luxe jaunt through Mexico aboard his private car, making everyone else seem moronic. Beverly, brilliantly cockeyed, was A.W.O.L. from Kahn for our party and openly kidded Kahn from our table, including ribald remarks about where the ice elephant was melting as it came majestically to Kahn's table. Otto Kahn, charming gent of the world that he was, took it in his stride, and when Beverly brought him to our table to say hello, I sophomorically greeted him with—"Art condescending to Mammon!" John Gilbert, Virginia Valli and Colleen Moore and other stars whose names I cannot recall of course registered the usual banalities.

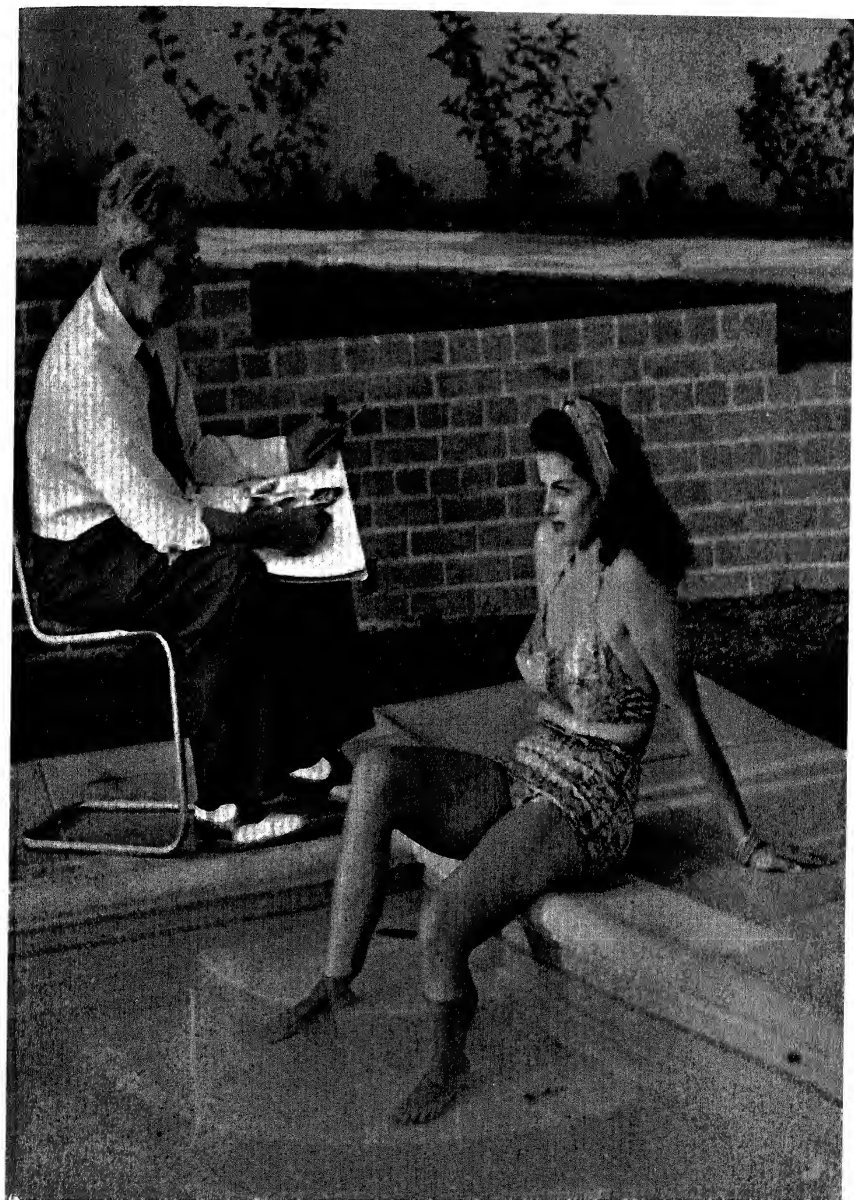
The males in our party, seeing the success of the pyrotechnical Nichols, were jealous. All they could think of to do in defense of their egos was to mutter, "Pansy!" That shows how far a sophisticate can be understood and what he can get from strangers in return for being handsome and gay.

Those were the days in Hollywood when wrought-iron gates separated the living room from the dining room, and fake awnings were supported by spears and flatulent outbreaks were the price of sitting down on the pillow of any chair whatever; and that's not forgetting the Star Spangled Banner assaulting you on the gent's throne, either—charming sons and daughters of soda-jerks.

But when Trixie Friganza sang her song in the Coconut Grove, "Balls, Picnics and Parties," that was the beginning of the Bawdy Era. It took with people who were tired of being "nice." I think she must have been the maiden aunt of Dwight Fiske. That was the Revolution. Spivy was her niece, once removed.

In 1929 Brownie came back from Paris just a few hours too late to save the million dollars he had amassed—on paper.

Brownie is a Canuck of Scottish background and was accustomed, as a child, to dining completely encircled by bagpipers on the graveled paths outside the manorial dining hall in Hamilton, Ont.; playing the pibroch while he lapped up that unspeakable dish called haggis, and inhaling oatmeal and Scottish Whusky for dessert. Eventually he sickened of it all, and after serving as a purser on a Great Lake boat, he came to New York determined to be an American. This he did, with my help, and I'm not sure whether he regrets it or not, or whether he holds my connivance against me. Nevertheless he bought a pantograph and a camera and became the *Satevepost's* most popular illustrator. I called him the Arnold Genthe of Upper Broadway. Everybody in our gang loves Brownie (just as we do ol' Massa Grantland Rice) for one reason: nothing is too much trouble for him to do on behalf of a friend. When we are stuck—about anything at all—we call Brownie. He knows the answer always, and if he doesn't know it he'll put you in touch with the feller who does. There never was such a man. He's the "man-of-the-world" with a heart. And what a break he got when Grace decided to make an honest man of him! Grace is one of the most charming women on this man's island, with



Flagg does a famed pencil portrait of Jane Russell, "the last word in Sultritude"



Hedy LaMarr turns the tables on J.M.F.

exquisite taste and *beaucoup de talent* and *goût*, and simpatico; even to Brownie.

In one of these Hollywood trips with Brownie, I met a young woman I thought the most beautiful one in America: Catharine Dale Owen.

She had played with Holbrook Blinn in New York until she suddenly lost most of her voice, temporarily, and sought a job in the movies. I introduced her to some important people. I got Jack Barrymore to invite her to his bungalow, in fact he asked me to bring her to a noon breakfast of caviar and champagne. He asked Brownie too, and arranged to get Catharine a screen test, and followed it up by giving her a lot of practical advice. He told her, for instance, not to act but to keep a dead pan all through a test. When Katie, as I called her, took rooms in the other half of Jack's bungalow building, Jack said:

"For Christ's sake tell that beautiful Miss Owen to stop parading up and down the sidewalk in front of my windows with her hair hanging down her back. I'll have a hard time explaining it to Dolores."

Catharine washed her lovely long golden hair and dried it outdoors. I took her to the parties Brownie and I were asked to. One was at the home of that delightful zany, Donald Ogden Stewart. Larry Stallings tried to appropriate the Kentucky beauty and was furious at my friend Reginald Simpson for seeming to have the same idea. Larry hissed privately to me that if he had Simpson down south he'd beat him up. I think he was laboring under a delusion, for I knew how husky ex-cavalryman Simpson was, and that Larry was forgetting he had left a leg on Flander's Field.

It was a high party and Reg forgot that he was a newcomer in Hollywood trying to get into the movies and playfully sat on Jack Gilbert's chest as he was relaxing on a lounge. This sort of thing just wasn't done. I explained at long length to Reg that he was practically in the same position as a private would be if he got into an officer's party.

I took Catharine to a Sunday party at Jack Gilbert's house

on the hill and told him that she would be his next leading lady. My caul must have been working, as that is exactly what she became! It was in Gilbert's first and last appearance on the talking screen; when Hollywood sneered so viciously at Jack's recorded voice because sound recording was in its awkward age and most people's voices registered as if they were talking into a rain barrel.

Carey Wilson showed me the \$30,000 black marble bath Gilbert had had installed for Greta Garbo, who, although she had already jilted Jack, was nevertheless at the party that afternoon playing tennis. At that time Greta was just coming into her fame as the number one dream girl of the world, and although I had seen her many times on the silver screen, I was stopped in my tracks when she sauntered into the room from the tennis courts. I was immediately sunk; sunk to the eyebrows in adoration of this former Svenska barbershop assistant. She was 100% more shockingly attractive than the screen gave any hint of. The two of us paid scant attention to anybody else from that moment till midnight. I asked her to let me make a drawing of her head. She asked how I would like her to pose so I told her, Good God, any way. She sat on the end of a sofa and let her head fall back over the end arm. Of course she knew how wonderful her neck looked. I told her naturally I liked that, but I knew she couldn't hold such a pose.

It ended by her sitting on the sofa while I sat on the brick coping of the fireplace at her feet. I had immediately looked at her feet, of course, on account of the tale of her having such big ones. A silly lie. She wore sevens; she was a tall girl and her feet were just right.

Her own eyelashes, not the pasted-on sort, were so long and thick that when she lowered them it was like a Venetian blind being let down.

I did a head of her, a good one, and gave her the original. Queerly enough we were alone while I was doing this drawing, in spite of its being a big party with all the big brass of Hollywood there.

We talked and talked. We talked frankly about why she was supposed to be aloof and uncommunicative and all the other things people said and wrote. Then people began drifting into the room. Jack Gilbert and I chatted. Garbo was standing near saying nothing, and in a reminiscent mood Jack, turning slightly in the direction of Garbo, said:

"That was when I was in love—a year ago!"

Not a peep from Garbo.

I could see that poor Gilbert was still in love with her. Gilbert was an attractive, intelligent, good-looking kid—and hard hit. But he wasn't Garbo's answer. I doubt if she will ever find the final one, even though she has tried assiduously.

A lot of chatter was going on in the room by then, and Garbo took a chair and tilted it against the wall and just sat and watched me work. I told her that if she came into a room in a potato sack she would be the best-dressed woman in the place. I made another sketch of her in her tilted chair and foolishly gave it to Jack Gilbert as a gesture of compassion. The oaf lost it, as editors found out later when they wanted to get it to print.

Garbo said a number of things, like:

"You are the first real artist I have met since I came to America!" and "Could I come to New York and be your model—I want to."

When I have thought this over it sounds incredible, but it just happens to be the truth. I concluded I would be a stupid ass to pretend that I thought she was being funny.

I can think of no woman I would prefer to draw and paint. Her combination of character and beauty enthralled my imagination, and this twelve-hour affair, although emotional, was curiously sexless. That sounds odd even to me, thinking as I do of Garbo as nothing if not a siren, and in spite of her telling me she was only a "Svenska Flicka," a little Swedish girl. Maybe she had been when Arnold Genthe made these first wonderful photos of her when she first landed here. But then the movies had grabbed her, and with their superior wisdom about women

had starved Garbo until she lost all the charming roundness of youth and handed her anemia in return for her trouble.

A lot of us later that night went from Gilbert's party down the Hill to George Fitzmaurice's. Garbo and I paid no attention to anyone during that party, although she did put a Swedish laughing record on the victrola and sat back watching the reactions on people's faces as they listened to this record recording *nothing but laughs*. At the buffet supper we snubbed some strange Iowans and idiotically I took a sip of her coffee. She looked at me with astonishment and asked me if those were American manners. I told her I didn't think so—that I was just a little nutty. Then she looked seriously at me and said: "You can do anything you like."

I felt lightheaded. We wandered out into the music room and saw Jack Gilbert sitting alone on the back of his neck on a lounge.

"Where have *you* been—we missed you!" we said brightly.

"Like hell you did!" he growled.

He was of course right.

I had my pad and crayon with me as is my custom, for insurance against boredom, and I had promised Fitzmaurice to make a head of his wife. Mrs. Fitz took Garbo and me up to her boudoir and I went to work, with Garbo standing in the doorway watching until I had finished. Then she left, saying to me:

"I want to see more of you."

I felt the same way about her but I never saw her again. Fitzmaurice told me later that this innocent half-day affair, entirely under the watchful eye of Hollywood, had, for a while, been the talk of the town.

Two years later, during the period when Garbo was putting on the silly hiding act, I was out on the coast again and I wanted to see her and make some more drawings of her. I had several people trying to locate her, and when I was out visiting my dear friend John McCormick I told him that I hadn't been able to find the beautiful Swede. He said he'd locate her. John,

being Big Brass in Hollywood, could do things. He came back from telephoning and said:

"Hold onto your hat! Her manager says Miss Garbo doesn't want to be annoyed by Mr. Flaggl!"

I could have come back at her with "Are those Swedish manners?" I don't know what caused the message, and it was the harder to take since I had done nothing to merit it. Garbo lost a fan.

I went out again to Hollywood for the Associated Press to make pencil portraits and write articles to go with them. I did about twenty-seven, and of all those the one I wanted to do more than any other was Jack Barrymore. I had loaned Jack the portrait I had painted of him as Hamlet, which I borrowed from the Museum of the City of New York for his *My Dear Children* show. He had it about a year and it hung over the mantel in the one set he used, and in each performance he would go over and address the canvas sardonically—and never the same in any performances.

When he came to New York with this show I told his producers that I thought I rated two front row seats for the opening so that I could lean on the footlights. They agreed, so I took the handsome Irene Christie with me. Jack asked me to his party at the Monte Carlo after the show, and as Diana had already asked me too, it seemed like a good idea. During most of the supper Diana and Miss Dudley sat on either side of Jack, but when these girls left for a moment the notorious Mrs. B., who must have been hiding behind a pillar, slipped in alongside of Mr. Barrymore and it was all off. When Diana returned she was fit to be tied. Then Mr. and Mrs. Barrymore retired and the balloon came down. We stopped at Jack's table in an adjoining room on our way out to say good night. He was sitting there with his wife and another couple. Jack said:

"Monty, have you met my wife?"

"No, naturally not!" I said.

"What do you mean, 'naturally not'?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know—it just occurred to me!" I smiled and said.

Now back to Hollywood. The A.P. made an appointment for Jack to come to my room at the Ambassador and they said, "You'll be disappointed—Jack has changed so!" Although Jack had inevitably changed physically, looking like a dissipated old clubman, his spirit was like old times and we had a wonderful evening. I drank Scotch and he drank all three bottles of Vermont his man-nurse brought in a little suitcase. Jack was gay, witty and charming; and the detractors were wrong. I made a pencil head of him and stuck it up on my bureau.

I woke up sitting upright in my easy chair and looked at my watch—it said 6:15. I wasn't sure whether it was that time in the evening or morning. I decided finally that it was morning and looked around the room. To my perturbation Jack wasn't there. I called "Jack!" Nothing happened. I looked in the bathroom, in the clothes closet and then under the bed, remembering that was the most logical place to look for him. No Jack. Then I was worried. Later in the morning I got in touch with his nurse and asked questions. It seems that I went to sleep at two A.M. and that then he and Jack had left, he having a devil of a time persuading Jack not to attend a rehearsal of some movie. Now Jack was at the radio studio, "very well organized," he told me, and they were all scared to death of him. I never saw dear old Jack again.

At that time the next important person in Hollywood was from my point of view Hedy LaMarr. I found her beautiful and lovable and spent the morning with her at the studio making my drawings and having lunch. Although she was said to be a Viennese Jewess I saw no racial trace, especially with her lovely retroussé nose—my favorite nose on women. It would be only a blind and deaf man who wouldn't fall in love with her. She would be the only living woman I would forgive for not having full breasts! Still I must admit there is one star on the screen, whom I drew before I left New York, who has *everything!* I'm afraid I must give her tops. That's Joan Fontaine. I have known most of the stars of the screen from way back; some of them were my models, like Mabel Normand,

Anna Q. Nilsson, Alice Joyce, Norma Shearer, Dolores Costello and other beauties past and present . . . but Joan Fontaine has everything.

I have an affectionate regard for many of the men stars as well. I even liked some of the English ones—all except the triple-superior ones, with an almost Nazi sort of arrogance; like Percy Marmont and Cecil Humphreys. Nobody is as wonderful and exclusive as those birds think they are.

One special favorite of mine in the masculine constellation was Bill Powell—intelligent, witty, sensitive about others and a gentleman. I'm sure he wouldn't mind my saying I classed him with Barrymore. These two had many characteristics in common. I sympathized with Powell in his deep sorrow over the loss of his greatest love, Jean Harlow. I saw them together at her house when I was drawing her. She was lovely and unspoiled.

One of the high spots was doing a picture of my old friend Bill (W. C.) Fields. The last time I had seen him was several years before when he was saying goodbye to Hollywood and driving back east, a disappointed man. Since that day he had come back with terrific success. Fields is the greatest and subtlest low comedian of his era. We sat out on his loggia drinking many drinks, and I drew him out while he told tales as only he could. He waved at Cecil De Mille's estate next to his and said:

"He won't speak to me. He thinks I am a bum."

J. P. McEvoy and his son dropped in as he was telling about a hospital experience, when he'd broken his neck or something and they'd hidden his clothes so he wouldn't leave. Bill decided to leave anyway, so he waited for the right moment when nobody was around and propped up his chin with a laundry shirt cardboard and started downstairs on tiptoes in his pajamas. As he couldn't see the steps very well, on account of the cardboard holding his chin too high, Fields stumbled and fell down the whole blinking flight and had to go back to bed for eight more weeks.

I enjoyed going out to Bart Marshall's and making a head of him; seeing his pretty wife again; piling over to dine at the L-shaped restaurant of that noble Brooklynite, Prince Mike Romanoff, who so bemoaned the theft of a little head I did of him years before that I did another one for him to paste up back of his bar.

Herbert Kevey, the hard-boiled head of the Los Angeles office of the A.P. was my guide, philosopher and Simon Legree on this job. It was he who had selected the stars they wanted me to interview. I mutinied at doing Mickey Rooney. I said I wasn't at all amused at the idea of drawing such a fresh little mick. Kevey, the wily, grinned and asked me why I didn't do Mickey in that mood. "You're on!" I said. So I sharpened my most malicious pencil and went out to the studio and met Mickey the Rooney. I was so pleased with the little devil's charm, appreciation and courtesy that I became one of his fans. Still I know he is a fresh little mick. But not to me!

One of my favorites was Gary Cooper; I drew him out in the broiling sun, then went in and had tea (of all things) with him. I naturally liked doing all the young lovelies, though there isn't much difference between them. I appreciated the new fashion of their having regular women's breasts, so that one can predetermine the sex at a glance. Carol Landis was the President of the Twin-Dome Association. Life is too long to go through it pretending that the world is flat—letting the prurient old maids of both sexes put up a smoke screen between you and the mountains.

Now that I think of it, of all the gals I drew Jane Russell was perhaps the last word in sultritude. My old pal John McCormick, Colleen Moore's ex, fixed up a party at his house in Beverly Hills so that I could draw the beautiful Jane in a bathing suit at his pool. This very healthy and seductive star-without-portfolio slipped her arm in mine as we walked back to the house and said:

"I like you!"

"Yes—and why?" I asked.

"Because you remind me of my grandfather," she beamed. Period.

Some day, if she lives long enough, the gorgeous Jane will be a well-preserved old dame with beautiful store teeth. She will have to give up raspberry jam because the seeds will play hell with her under plates! That is my only—if questionable—solace. I don't really mean that. I wish beautiful people like that could stay forever young. If I ran the world, they would.

And if I ran the world, there'd be some other things I'd do. I'd have my F.B.I. corral: all the ugly people, all the two-faced hypocrites, all pretenders, all morons, all people who pretend to like modern art, all nagging and jealous women, all religious fanatics, all gum-chewers, all unkind stupids, and take them out to Death Valley and drop an atomic bomb on them. After that I'm not quite sure what I'd do next! Take a richly deserved vacation, I guess.

Once in a while I like to ask people: "Tell me, which do you think predominates in this situation we call life: the ugly, unhappy, tragic, frightening, and foul things; or the beautiful, happy, delightful, charming, and peaceful things?" I get the funniest answers. Most people haven't even thought of it.

10. WORLD WAR I AND EATON'S MOVIES

IN WORLD WAR I, I was glad I was beyond the age to get into the trenches. And curiously the same thing applied in this war. In the First World War there were two or three meatless days a week. The only bread we had was a nasty gray loaf made of God-knows what besides pussywillows swept out from under bureaus. Men carried lumps of sugar in their vest pockets when they went to restaurants, a lot of people ate Nucoa because butter was scarce, and that foul German mess called sauerkraut was renamed "Liberty cabbage"! Dr. Muck, the *Kapellmeister*, refused to play the "Star Spangled Banner." There were more bands in that war (it was a hangover from romantic wars), and sentiment was rampant as is usual among Anglo-Saxons. In this war, sentiment and romance were not so evident. The accent is on *prayer*. *God Is My Co-Pilot*; "God Bless America"; "On a Wing and a Prayer"; "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." They are signs of the capitulation of the Decent Man. He gives up—he throws in his lot to the unknown. It is all so terrible, so impossible, so horrifying and beyond his ken, that he passes the buck to God. You can't blame the poor guy! It is unconditional surrender to Fate!

I was extremely active in 1917 in poster designing and in motion pictures for the service. I sat in on the first civilian preparedness committee in New York with Grosvenor Clarkson

as our chairman, and made the first poster of the war, "Storm Coming!" It was a pen and ink, and not so hot, for I hadn't gotten my stride if I may say so.

Walter Wanger, then a handsome youngster on the Mayor's Committee, got me to do the first litho three-sheet poster! Columbia asleep on a porch with a terrific thunderstorm coming along in the background. Of course I used Mary Arthur, with whom I was madly in love, as my model. I used her in many of my posters.

Governor Whitman appointed me State Military Artist. Although I was a member of George Creel's Artists' Committee, I functioned alone, for I was not herd-conscious. Dana Gibson was chairman of this committee and called meetings every time a cabin boy off a British ship appeared in our city.

I soon became horribly bored with rising toasts.

At one meeting a portrait painter from Philadelphia held out at length for pay for any posters done for the government. I was furiously disgusted with his attitude, because of my added conviction that such an ordinary portrait painter wouldn't be likely to be pestered by requests for posters. So I took the floor next and said "Balls!" Although one of the briefest speeches of my life, it was also one of the most successful since it summed up the feelings of all present. I wasn't so fiercely against being paid for my posters in this latest war. I realized that even the President was paid for his work.

A man from the War Department in Washington called on me at my studio and showed me a sketch of Uncle Sam pointing at you with the caption, "I Want You!"

"Is that familiar to you?" he asked

I said it was—that it was a poor copy of a cover I had made for *Leslie's Weekly*.

"Um, I thought so," he said, "this feller had 'em sold on his 'original' idea down at the War Department, but in the back of my head I knew I had seen it somewhere. I'll attend to this gent!"

So my original drawing was found, and from it they printed

four million recruiting posters; this was, of course, before the draft and it is generally recognized as the most famous poster of that war. The Smithsonian has the original. The government printed 350,000 copies for recruiting for this war, from the same design, and about a million more for other purposes.

I didn't like the circusy Uncle Sam with stars all over him so I made a new type: a handsome, dignified figure leaving all the stars off except four on his hatband, and the stripes left off the hat, too. A War Department mogul (I've forgotten his name) wrote me that it was their idea of how Uncle Sam ought to look.

Another wartime innovation for which I was responsible involved the phrase "Tell that to the Marines!" It had implied that the Marines are so gullible they would believe anything. My poster of that title made it a fighting battle cry. I repainted this poster on a huge canvas on the steps of the Library with my model posing, and a platoon of Marines with bayonets marching about. Gus Edwards and Al Jolson both wrote songs using my title, and at different times each sang their version on the Library steps, yanking their coats half off at the finale, as the man in my poster did.

The Public Library steps was in those days the grand forum for war publicity. Ginger Rogers later told me that either she or her mother posed on its steps for me, when she or her mother was a little girl, for a thousand-dollar Liberty Bond. Frances Starr, the actress, and I had to introduce each other there one afternoon.

"If you'll say I'm America's greatest actress," she whispered to me, "I'll say you are America's greatest artist."

Once at Grand Central Station I had just completed one of Bruce Bairnsfather and another of Leonora Ulrich when along came Raymond Hitchcock, known affectionately as "Hitchy." When I had done his head he grinned his famous grin and said to me with the manner of one conferring a citation:

"Do you know, Flagg, I think I shall use this for my posters!"

I WANT YOU



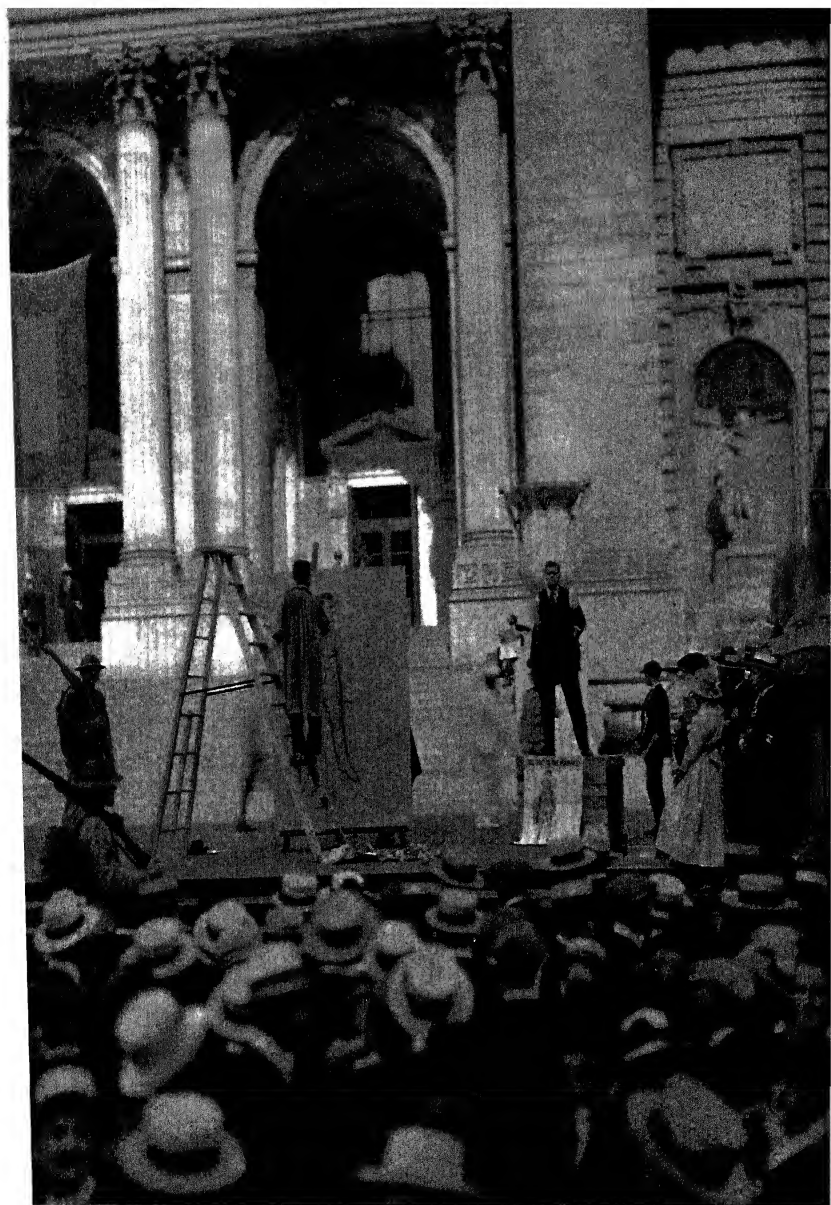
for the **U.S. ARMY**

From Painting By James Montgomery Flagg
© Leslie-Jones Co.

TC-41-R710-1-24-1918

UNITED STATES ARMY RECRUITING SERVICE

Flagg modestly calls this the most famous poster in the world



Flagg paints his poster "Tell That to the Marines" on the New York Library steps in World War I

"That will be very distinguished for you!" said I, with equal condescension.

There was a whole floor of the Grand Central Palace given over to war activities. Everyone of note did their bit at one time or another:

Of course, the stage being foremost, Jack Hazzard, the comedian, auctioned off his mustache which was shorn into a butterfly net for the highest bidder; Oliver Herford and Peggy got out a small newspaper in "Heroland"—that is what that floor was called. The huge space was divided into booths, as in a county fair, and I had a booth with a low fence around it where I did my pencil portraits for thousand-dollar Liberty Bonds. They came thick and fast with no breathing space for me between twenty-minute sittings.

I once sat on Charlie Schwab's knee on a stage in a Philadelphia theater. This was when Schwab was the head of all war shipping. A trainload of us went to Philly on some war project. Dana Gibson and many other notables were in our party. We sat in a semicircle, like minstrels, and I was slated to make a big drawing but the stage management became hysterical. Just as I was called out from the wings into the glare of the spotlight by one person, someone else grabbed me and told me it was a mistake and to go back. It was a huge stage and there wasn't time for me to retire without creating a considerable delay, so Charlie Schwab (bless him) caught my arm as I milled around and pulled me right down on his knees out of the way and there I sat like Charlie McCarthy till order was restored! A grand and simple man! And how he loved to tell the story of how he, the erstwhile "puddler" and eventual multimillionaire, once lost his last collar button and had to go to a big banquet collarless.

I must have been a born laplander-on-notables' knees. At the party that Messmore Kendall gave for our friend Gilbert White in Messmore's apartment above the Capitol Theater, Oliver Herford, whom I had known and loved since I was twelve years old, was sitting there and called to me. I got

over to him through the crowd; there were no vacant chairs, so he pulled me down on his poor bony old knee, saying—"Monty, you haven't sat on my knee for a long time!" I never had sat on his knee. Dear Oliver, a great favorite, an oft-quoted wit, poet of humor and an artist—his *Rubaiyat of a Persian Kitten* is probably his best-known book. His witticisms are still a legend. He originated countless amusing jabs. It was for instance he who changed the sign at the Players, "Exit in case of Fire!" to "Exit in case of Simmons"! Simmons was the club bore at the time.

I had an interesting time with Jack Eaton, who, backed by Eltinge Warner, the publisher and sportsman, thought of the idea of putting "the Flagg Girl" in movie shorts. I wrote the scripts and he produced the one-reelers. The old Edison Company put on about a dozen of them under the general title "Girls You Know." I found time from my illustrating to be with the little company of players while the pictures were being shot, in the old Biograph studios, and "had wonderful time." After that Eaton got Famous Players to order a dozen two-reelers—a bit more ambitious project which involved going down to Jacksonville, Florida, and Savannah, Georgia, among other places.

The two-reelers were really satires but they decided to call them comedies, as it was believed the public thought satires were goat-legged playboys who chased nymphs through the woods with intentions far from honorable. But since I had written no pie into these pictures how could they be comedies? Every month the Strand Theater showed one of my "comedies" on their bill, and one called *Independence B'gosh* was held over for a second week. Mr. Plunkett managed the Strand in those days, and it was a break for us that he liked them. I was very proud of the notice I got in a Boston magazine called *The Eighth Art*—and I hope you'll forgive my vanity in quoting it:

James Montgomery Flagg's short film satires continue to be the only worthwhile productions of the current comedy field. They have

JAP...

You're Next!



U. S. ARMY OFFICIAL POSTER

Flagg told F.D.R. he posed himself for this Uncle Sam in the mirror to save model hire. The President wrote him: "By the way, I congratulate you on your resourcefulness in saving model hire. Your method suggests Yankee forebears."



Flagg and a few of his posters (©*International News Photo*)

real cleverness, snap and sparkle, speed and originality and go a long, long way toward reconciling the sophisticated to the moving picture theater. Particularly so when discriminating taste has been so long nauseated by the stupid inanities of the 50-odd clowning buffoons who pose as screen comedians.

I sat next to Pauline Frederics in the balcony of the Strand when she was starring in the feature and one of my two-reelers was on the same bill. We both looked at each other and laughed ruefully at each other's "Klieg eyes." In the Silent Days almost everyone at one time or another, if they were under the glare of the Klieg lights too long, got Klieg eyes. You woke up the next morning and couldn't open your eyes until you had crumbled off a handful of frozen eggnog from your lids. You'd go around for a day or so with your eyes looking like a couple of tomatoes—then it was all over. Painful but passing.

I acted in some of my pictures myself, especially when it seemed indicated, as in the case of *Perfectly Fiendish Flanagan*, in which I burlesqued William S. (Two-Gun) Hart. At the time I didn't know him, but I had seen all his pictures and my satire pointed the Hart formula of the Bad Man being reformed by the glance of the eyes of a Pure Woman. Nor did I spare the horses. His movie associates in the East caught this satire and in all seriousness wired Hart that there was a "guy in the East trying to steal his stuff"! Bill got hold of one of the films, ran it off in his private projection room in Hollywood, and as he later told me nearly ruptured himself laughing. Shortly we arranged to meet and have been "pardners" from that day to this. Which now adds up to about twenty-five years.

I wrote all the captions (they called them "readers" Down East!) for my silent pictures. In a sense this was pioneering since up to that time all captions had been that high-flown "Came the Dawn" stuff which old-timers will remember with a chuckle.

We took two or three pictures in Jacksonville one winter. One was a satire on Prohibition, just then coming into its own

as the "Noble Experiment" according to Humorless Herbert Hoover. It was called *The Last Bottle*. I brought down a couple of quarts of Ayala champagne to play the leading part. Since the script called for the Last Bottle on earth to come to a tragic end against a stone wall, we first drank the champagne out of it on New Year's Eve and substituted some fizzy stuff in the bottle for the grand climax of the film.

My script called for a cliff for the final scene and struggle for the possession of the precious wine, and we had to settle on a two-hundred-foot hill as the cliff—the highest place in all Florida.

Next we filmed *Beresford of the Baboons*, a take-off on *Tarzan of the Apes*. Olin Howland—Jobina's brother—was our comedian and he had to play as the wild boy almost bare. Since it was quite chilly, we had to build fires on the beach near the jungle to thaw him out every so often. At that he complained bitterly. I did not blame him. He stuck it out like a trouper, but quit cold after the last shot and went to New York. So we had to get Harold Forshay down from New York in a hurry to do the lead in our next opus.

A very effective scene in *Beresford of the Baboons* was one in which Our Hero discovers, buried in the sand, square eggs, evidently laid by Cubist hens. Our property man had cleverly contrived square shells over real eggs with a coating of thin plaster of Paris. These eggs were cracked and cooked over a Sterno by Beresford's foster parents, a couple of housekeeping baboons.

One night, I remember, was the climax to a battle I had had with Jack Eaton and his associate Ken Spear over which leading lady was to be used in our next picture. I had to prevail, as I meanly pointed out to them that I had the last word on account of their being Flagg Pictures. They were sore as crabs for a while, but I gave Jack a bottle of precious whisky I had brought with me. Shortly thereafter I could hear them in the next room. Then they asked us in. After moving the furniture to the walls of their bedroom they staged a fight at which

occasionally they would stop for a drink and then go at each other again on the mattress they had put on the floor.

Between grunts and groans I could hear Ken Spear gurgling, "Oh, I wish you could be Jimmy Flagg for a minute!" It was a howling success and after the fight we all went down to Cutie Pierce's restaurant to celebrate. Cutie served us sherry from Spain, brought over in goatskins but served in teapots to fool the sleuths. The Land of the Free!

In the hotel in Jax I insisted on opening windows in the dining room, an act which was bitterly resented by all the old dames who, as is their custom in hotels, chose to sit at tables directly under windows. So the management foiled me by nailing heavy wooden cleats over all the window frames. It didn't look pretty but it was efficient. All air was excluded.

Olin Howland played the comic lead in a number of my pictures as only he could play them. In one picture, a satire on Doug Fairbanks I called *One Every Minute*, Olin had to climb up on the outside of the McAlpin Hotel to the roof. We hired a "human squirrel" to double for Olin and actually do the climbing. We had cameras across the street in 33rd Street, and on the roofs near by, to get all the angles. The fellow did the trick, from the street up to the roof, but then to our horror before anyone could stop him we saw Olin climb out the fifteenth-story window and up the outside wall—fingers and toes in stone cracks to the roof—to the parapet four stories above him! And, hold your hat, he *ran* around the *foot-wide* top ledge, laughing.

"Gosh!" he later explained—"you didn't need to hire that guy. I could have done the whole thing!"

I don't think there is a living man other than Olin who without some previous experience would have had the crazy nerve to attempt that feat!

Olin is one of my best friends. I don't see him often, as he lives in Hollywood. I have great respect and admiration for that ham. He is a person. He is completely organized for life—life as he wants it. If he finds his cash is getting low he gets

a job, a character part in the movies, makes enough to keep him for a while, and in the interim does what he chooses; travels, paints (and how he can paint!), reads, sees plays, thinks, makes friends; a civilized man. If he suggests to me that I must see a play, a movie, read a book, or see an exhibition of paintings, I take his suggestion—he never lets me down. He knows. He was a great dancer and introduced American dances into England. He keeps his enthusiasm for life, generous, thoughtful, kind, talented. I consider him one of the most extraordinary humans I know.

He had been a comedian all his life when, suddenly, he became a distinguished water-colorist. I wrote the foreword for the catalogue for his exhibition of water colors at Milch's Galleries over on 57th Street.

He later took the show to London and exhibited on Bond Street, using the same catalogue with my foreword. Now in this blurb of mine I used an expression: "He went to bed a vaudevillian . . . and got up an artist!" He told me those dirty British had placed an entirely different connotation on my innocent words. However, he sold every last one of his paintings to the toffs. Lord Beaverbrook, Lady This and Those . . . and the Queen was very much put out when she came to his show too late to get one. Understandably they want him back . . . with more water-colors!

And yet he hadn't sold *one* at his exhibition in New York. No comment! But there is *as yet* no law against thinking. Probably because there's not enough thinking in this country to make a law against it.

I suppose the story of a man is a story of his friends. Olin is something like Jack. He likes anyone he chooses to like: a truck driver, a stage grip, a duchess, a hoofer, a screen artist, a soda-jerk—anyone who seems real. Neither Jack nor Olin have cared a damn what other people thought. They were free. And Mister—or Missus—how many people do *you* know who have that beautiful courage?

In two of my movie satires, *The Bride* and *Hick Manhattan*,

I had a beautiful young blonde—from Dixie, the Land of Man-Traps, of course. At this period few had heard of her. She had not yet begun to rival Frank Buck. Later on she became more than well known as Peggy Hopkins Joyce. Genial Saul Harrison directed these two-reelers with taste and intelligence. He really knew the silent flickers.

In spite of the usual little irritations and spats we all had a good, exciting time. Jack Eaton kept at me for a long time to sign a contract with the Famous Players for more of these pictures. It didn't amuse me any more, so I refused. Finally he browbeat me into it. I signed it, but at the bottom of the paper I put a codicil, saying: "Unless I happen to change my mind, J.M.F." They said no more. If I had only realized that kicks in the prat and pies in the kisser were what the United Sheep of America wanted, these movies of mine might have been going still! Only I wouldn't and couldn't have written them.

Jack Eaton and I also worked out a two-reeler for the U.S. Marines. Naturally we had their co-operation and as a consequence there were at least a company of the big-boys in full accoutrement, including fixed bayonets, attached to me wherever I went for several weeks. All the brass came to my studio and I made heads of them, from General LeJeune through Major General Barnett and the Colonels—Davis, McLemore and others I cannot recall. One of these great gents gave me a pair of Cortez period rapiers he had dug up in Cuba, rusty, but even these hundreds of years later still with a flexible spring to the blades. For the movie's premiere at the Globe Theater on Broadway, two huge Marines in full war dress with gleaming bayonets marched up and down in front of the theater to point it up. They had shortly to be relieved from their sentry duties because the public was scared away: it thought the joint had been put under military arrest. Publicity that misfired. After the Marines had vanished the crowd came in.

My next script-writing job was for the official Red Cross movie. This was more complicated to produce, and we went to New Orleans to get the shots to simulate scenes in France.

Ray McKee, the Mack Sennett comic star, was our lead. The story was not at all comic, but McKee also happened to be a fine actor, as I might suggest most comedians are underneath. See J. Barrymore.

On our way to Louisiana our troupe stopped off at Hattiesburg, Miss., a huge infantry camp. The troops had built the roads in this lousy neck of the woods. Trudging over them was like walking through brown sugar.

Thousands of draftees were stuck in these pine wildernesses with no place to go after work. Nothing to see, nothing to drink, nothing to . . . well, just nothing. They were marched—hundreds of them on these roads—for my picture. Luckily for us we spent only one night there in the one “hotel,” which was in the center of a maze of railroad tracks. Engines clanked and hooted round and round the joint all night long. We were all glad to get to N’yawlyns and civilized living. To Antoine’s for the Oysters Rockefeller, baked in their shells and lying in hot salt! Um . . . good! And pompano cooked in paper bags. And the Silver Fizzes.

And the sewers topside running oozily along in the gutters. The spidery wrought-ironwork galleries—two-story buildings. . . . New Orleans is an overrated dump! Ship it back to Marseilles and see if I care.

There was a shot we wanted of an explosion in a street and a flock of frightened geese scuttering around a corner. We asked the mayor if he’d give us permission. He was an ex-Bowery boy from New York and he said:

“Sure, go ahead—blow up a street if you want to, boys!”

In World War One we had conductorettes on the trolley-cars in New York. If we had had women conductors and drivers on our busses in this war it might have been a relief from the insolent and ill-mannered micks who man a large percentage of these vehicles. I have had the unpleasant thought, as I watched the acceptance of their contemptuous commands by the apathetic New Yorker, that just so do the Germans allow the Gestapo to treat them like cattle. Maybe it’s because so

many refugees are now passengers in our glorious free city!

Another of my movies was *The Conductorette*, in which I took a part, and my wife, the conductorette, was played by Florence Fair, a dark-haired, strikingly beautiful young gal. Though she was a tall and charming creature, with curiously wide cheekbones she didn't especially interest me. I liked to draw her and that was all.

I didn't see her again for twenty-five years. Meanwhile she had been on the stage as leading lady to E. H. Sothorn, and others. We met again when she was in her forties, and the exact opposite to the usual thing had happened; instead of behaving in the conventional, expected manner and becoming middle-aged and less attractive, she had almost turned into another person—far more beautiful, desirable and vital. It has never happened to me before. Usually former models of mine, whom I don't see for a quarter of a century have become distinctly middle-aged—unrecognizable; in an almost invariably shocking way. And I don't think much of it! When I feel in a rude mood, I occasionally tell these dames they look like zombies. They naturally resent it and usually come back with "Well, you don't look so hot yourself!" But that has no sting whatever, for I knew it first. I knew what the years had done to me—to the last wattle and potgut. As an artist, I especially loathe what that ruthless sadist Time does to everything.

My dentist and friend (sounds like a contradiction in terms) William Wallace Walker was the President of the Dental whatchercallit, Tusk-Borer's Guild or Fang-Miner's Union, Drill Sergeant—a huge, hearty, life-loving guy, and the chairman of the entertainment committee of the Lotos Club. "Willie" Walker was very popular, except with my grandmother who was his patient once—only once. She called him a butcher and said "he leans on your chest." Maybe he did, but he knew his business. My mother had been a patient of Willie's when she was a girl, and he had me on the hot squat from the age of eight. He was forthright and never pulled any punches. He once got the notion that I ought to paint Mark Twain's

portrait. Mark was a beloved member of the Lotos, and they gave a famous dinner at which he was the guest of honor. It seemed as though all the top-liners in the world were gathered to honor the famous humorist. An hour after the dinner was supposed to start the guest had not arrived. They waited and they phoned. No answer. A committee went down in a cab to Twain's home: and found him in bed smoking and reading. He had completely forgotten all about it. Or so he said. They hustled him into some clothes and took him and his big black cigar up to the club—and a time was had.

When Dr. Walker said that the Lotos Club would give me a life membership for my portrait of Twain, it was in the bag. Willie had to do some tall talking to get Twain to pose for a portrait, but in spite of the old gent's saying he would "rather have smallpox than sit for his picture" he finally consented. So I spent several Sunday mornings with Twain painting and listening. He told me stories in his drawl and I got laughing so I couldn't paint. We were in his room at the back of the old house on West 11th Street, which was connected with the front room by a long passage. He could tip his chair back and see Mrs. Clemens sewing in her room in the front. He had been cussing softly, then he said to me:

"My wife cusses too, not the same words. *She* says 'Sugar!' and the Recording Angel will give her just as black marks as he does me!"

William Dean Howells and Poultney Bigelow, the pal of Willie Hohenzollern, would come in and they'd all get talking. I found it so interesting I'd forget all about painting. I had just enough sense to keep my trap shut and listen. I have a hazy remembrance that these men were planning some scheme for a vast celebration which involved Queen Victoria. Mark Twain had just come back from a lecture tour of the world from which he had made \$100,000 in order to pay the debts of his publisher—debts he wasn't responsible for. And all this in his old age. The creditors were paid in full.

He had a funny way of spreading his mail in a long row on

the floor, walking down the line and choosing letters he thought he wanted to look at. He said he was glad I hadn't given him "society" eyebrows. One of his longhorn eyebrows turned up and the other one turned down. Howells, looking at my finished portrait, said:

"You've got Sam at his stormiest!"

He had a house on the Avenue in later years, and I often saw him standing in his area, or areaway, as old New Yorkers called the sunken space leading to the tradesmen's entrance. Occasionally he would be talking to his old Negro butler. He always was dressed in white, and with his white mane he wasn't a figure to forget. He explained his clothes by saying:

"I don't like to be conspicuous, but I *do* like to be the most noticeable person!"

Maisie La Shelle, years later, told me the best story about Mark Twain. Mark and Howells were in the front row at the old Academy hearing Adelina Patti in some opera. Howells noticed the wicked leer in Mark's eye and questioned him. Mark, heaving a big sigh, said through his teeth in Howells's ear:

"I would rather sleep with that woman *stark naked*, than with General Grant in full uniform!"

Mark himself told me a story about an Englishman in a tough saloon in the Far West, a tenderfoot; there was only one other customer, a beefy unself-conscious, uninhibited cow-person who leaned on the bar and ran the gamut of animal noises. Starting with a sneeze, a cough, and an expectoration, he startled the Britisher; who edged down the bar with astonished and popping eyes. The cow-person went blandly through his astounding repertory, closing with a burping arpeggio closely followed by the finale—a blast as deep and as rounded as the lowest note of the trombone in mating season, and so loud that the bottles and glasses clinked on the shelves. A cryptic, conceited smile combined with an unfocused gleam of satisfaction spread on the cow-person's red face. The Britisher had by now edged right up to this virtuoso and had leaned forward to look

with stark admiration into the Westerner's puss. "I sa-a-y! Tell me, my good fellow," murmured the astonished Britisher, "can you do something with your navel?"

11. ILSE

BUT. Every one of the Four Freedoms ends in *But!*

The Four Buts. Betcha when Philip Wylie brought out his *Generation of Vipers* he got a carload of indignant protest. People don't want writers to bump them out of their comfortable smugness. Anyone whose prejudices don't match the critics' prejudices is . . . ill-informed. Did a critic ever have a statue in a public square?

Once I let my friend Al Pach put on an exhibition of my water-colors at his galleries, with the proviso that no critics were to be asked to it. I didn't give a damn what they thought! I didn't sell one painting. Thirteen more than I would have sold if they had aired their ignorance about them. *But hundreds of teachers brought their pupils to see them.* They clogged the elevators. They weren't for sale. Curiously I didn't want to sell any of them. I liked them myself. That's why I did them.

I would add one more freedom to the Four—those beautiful butterflies that seem to escape the butterfly net . . . the Freedom of Straight Thinking. People are forever trying to fence you in. We are all guilty. If you say something you believe, somebody always says you are prejudiced. If your prejudices run counter to his, then *you* are prejudiced! Freedom of speech doesn't quite cover the question, because one man always objects to the other feller's having the effrontery to *think* such things! If we have a lot of experience of certain things or people

we inevitably draw conclusions, we generalize. That is called prejudice. And every one who calls you "biased, intolerant and prejudiced" is himself biased, intolerant and prejudiced. He gets so steamed up about it he gets laws passed to punish anyone who disagrees with him. And he's pretty damn noble and smug about it. You can't stop prejudice with laws. Any more than you can stop drinking by prohibition. You can quell overt acts, as you should, but no law made by man can stop *bias* and *prejudice*, only time and education can do that. In a perfect world there will be nothing but brotherly love, but the constabulary won't accomplish it. My friend Krishnamurti of India, a wise man, called number one philosopher out there, gave me a helpful, inspiring thought. It was this: Stop looking for *differences* in races, look for what you have in common with them! If we could only do just that. It's beautiful, isn't it?

It seems to me quite a feat if a man can evaluate himself; look at himself and his character objectively. One instance of an honest summing-up of one's self was my friend Dean Cornwell's. He said quite seriously: "I am not a great artist, but I am a great craftsman." He may be a great artist at that, but he certainly is a great craftsman. I have always remembered that with pleasure—the intellectual candor and the love of truth that artists have. His always generous praise and his unvarying desire to be of help professionally from the stores of his wide knowledge endear him to his friends. I can't resist repeating my reaction to the naming of the barroom that Dean glorified with murals that made the drink hall of the Hotel Warwick a museum of Fine Art.

"The Raleigh Room?" I once remarked to some underprivileged Hearst executive. "Why not call it properly the Cornwell Room? After all, Raleigh was just another illustrator!" The public wouldn't have understood that crack as Raleigh, the illustrator, wasn't widely enough known.

There is an utter lack of honest evaluation in regard to what is called "a love affair." In ninety-nine cases out of a

hundred the proper name would be "lust affair"; if people were honest, which few are. Not that the phrase love affair is used these days; I use it just to segregate it from business affairs. As a rule men speak of love in a loose and inexact manner. It gives their activities a spacious air of Romance which builds up their ego; as one refers to a residence when it is only a hall bedroom. It's all part of the universal cowardice—the shrinking from truth. To me it is sickening to hear every cat-on-the-back-fence performance referred to as "Love"!

I had my share of those episodes that, in my ignorance, I thought were "Love." There was one that deluded me to the altar. Still it wasn't love. I only imagined it was, until I woke up. This, my second marriage, was so distasteful to me that although I sat down to try to write about it I could find no words which equaled the bitterness of the experience.

Love, while it begins with physical desire and passion, is more, much more than that. It is a matter of growth, of quality, of breeding, of strong sympathy, of shared troubles and joys. In other words, a roll in the bed with honey isn't love! And the tragic part of it is that you never learn this until you're past the age for it to happen to you again!

I must tell of the great love of my life.

I was in my little old studio over Milch's gallery talking to an English friend, when the Negro elevator man announced Miss Ilse Hoffmann. I didn't know her; he said she was a model. She came in, dead pan, and said,

"If you hadn't seen me this time I should never have come again. I have called twice before and this man wouldn't let me see you."

I was in no mood to take any hoity-toity. I looked her over, as did my watchful friend the Englishman. I saw a tall girl in black with reddish curls, dark reddish . . . she walked over to my mirror.

"Would you like to see me with my hat off?" she said.

She didn't wait for an answer but took it off, looking at herself in the mirror. And *shaking her curls back!* So I fell like a

load of bricks. Just at her shaking her curls in the cloudy old mirror! I was just recovering from the nightmarish collapse of my second marriage. The time was right. Something important to me had been missing. This was the answer!

The reason I was cold and rude to her was, I like to think, because I sensed, without knowing it consciously, that this girl was going to be terribly important to me. She was. The most important thing in my life and the most tragic. My "veil" must have been functioning. I looked at her superciliously, matching her cold, businesslike attitude and perhaps adding a little. An unconscious defense, but a futile one, against what was to come. So I took her phone number and her address and told her I would call her if I could use her. My God! She left and my friend left a bit later. I could hardly wait for her to get home, five blocks away. Then I phoned and she answered. All that fake coldness had vanished from us both. So I shall have to testify that there is such a thing as love at first sight. And I mean love. Of course lust was in the picture, but that wasn't all. I know the difference, I know they go together. Time proves it, one way or the other, and mine lasted to and beyond her death. Hers lasted two or three years; which is understandable, I suppose, when you consider that I was much older. I know it's supposed, and generally rightly so, that love at first sight is absurd. But the damn thing happens.

Her physical and emotional beauty enthralled me and for good measure she had humor, generosity, intelligence, and good taste. To me there never was such a woman. It couldn't last. It was much too wonderful. She was my regular model; probably the world's worst, for she hated posing. But I painted and drew her all the time because she was what, in all my experience, I wanted most to draw. Her features were not classical but whatever was wrong was doubly right because it was hers. She was a German and I had been through Germany before the World War I, and, as I told her, there was nothing like her in that damned country. I was over there before she was born. Although I have explained what she was like in many

drawings and paintings, and one bit of sculpture, I want to try to give you some idea in words . . . a measly medium compared to paint. She was tall, not the tallness of my daughter, but tall for a girl. She had a beautiful figure with the loveliest, full, up-pointed breasts I ever saw, with pink (not coffee-colored) nipples!

Ilse always contended that breasts should point out from the torso to be beautiful. She was always right. She was slender and *soignée* and could wear clothes, when she had them. And when she was working at her photography later on she could get herself up to seem like the damndest-looking scarecrow. But her eyes were something . . . large, gray and *long, thick lashes*. She had a trick of standing close and looking up at me and suddenly opening her eyes to the limit right at me so that it made my heart turn over. Then she would smile mischievously and walk away.

Women *should* be coquettes. How dull and unfeminine women are who are forthright, good-fellows, good pals, one of the boys, honest, take-it-or-leave-it-creatures. Good God! I'd much rather be with men when I just want good company. As I look at women, I often imagine how they would look shorn to the skull. Much more hideous than men. They have no backs to their heads ninety-nine times out of a hundred. Like Prussian bastards!

Ilse's hands weren't beautiful . . . not noticeably, I mean. They were strong, characterful and feminine, but not soft. She had worked in her young life and it toughened her dear hands. She had a turned-up nose. She was nearsighted and it made me weak at the knees when she came squinting and smiling to me across the street; with her eyelashes all jammed up. The world could go lean on the lake! And that included all my relations, by blood or my marriage, and art editors yet unborn.

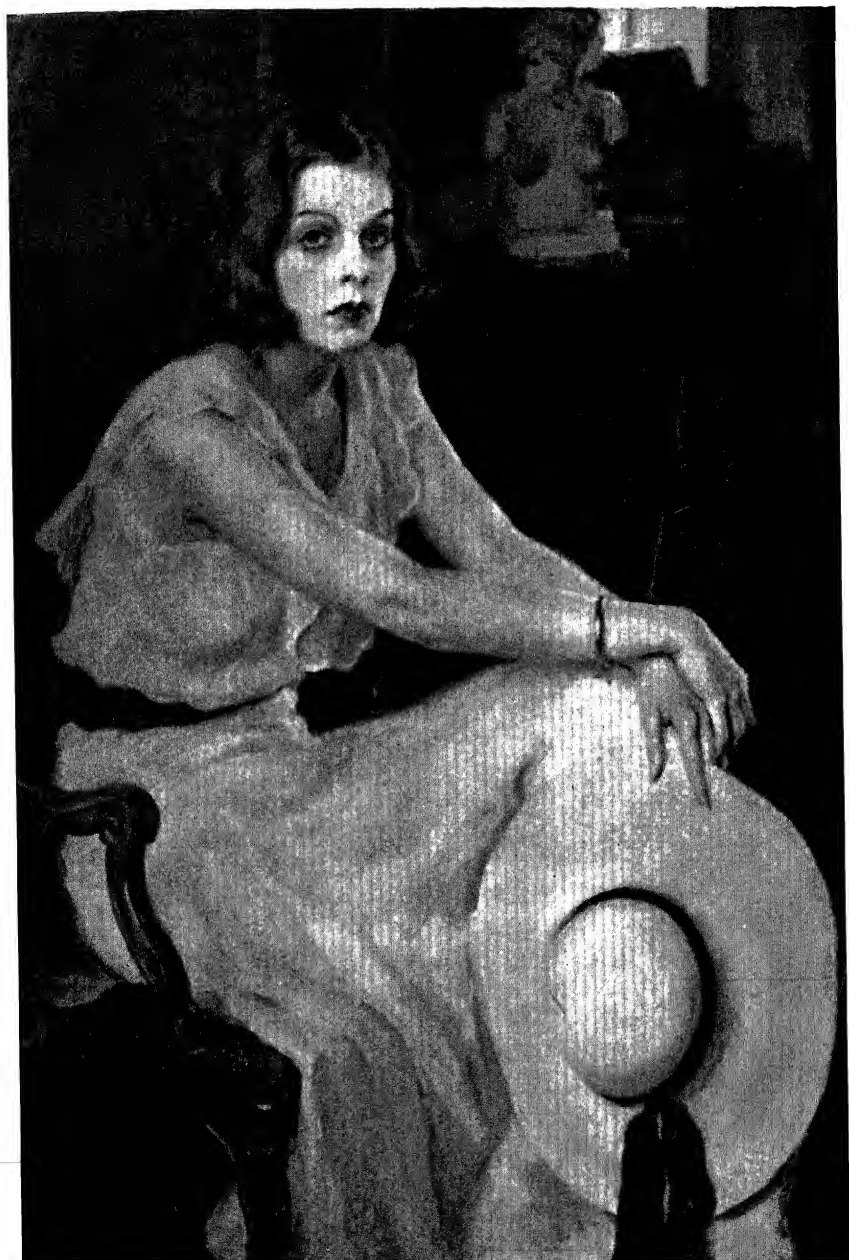
Ilse said she was engaged to a man who wrote about motor-boats and that he treated her shabbily, especially at the parties he took her to, where he would leave her and make love to other women. It sounded silly to me so I told her to break her en-

gagement, which she did, but there must have been some kind of wild scene involved, because when she came back to my studio a couple of hours later she was in a distressed state of mind. On the under side of her left wrist I saw several scratches, which she said she had made with a razor blade in a halfhearted attempt to commit suicide after her final meeting with this bounder.

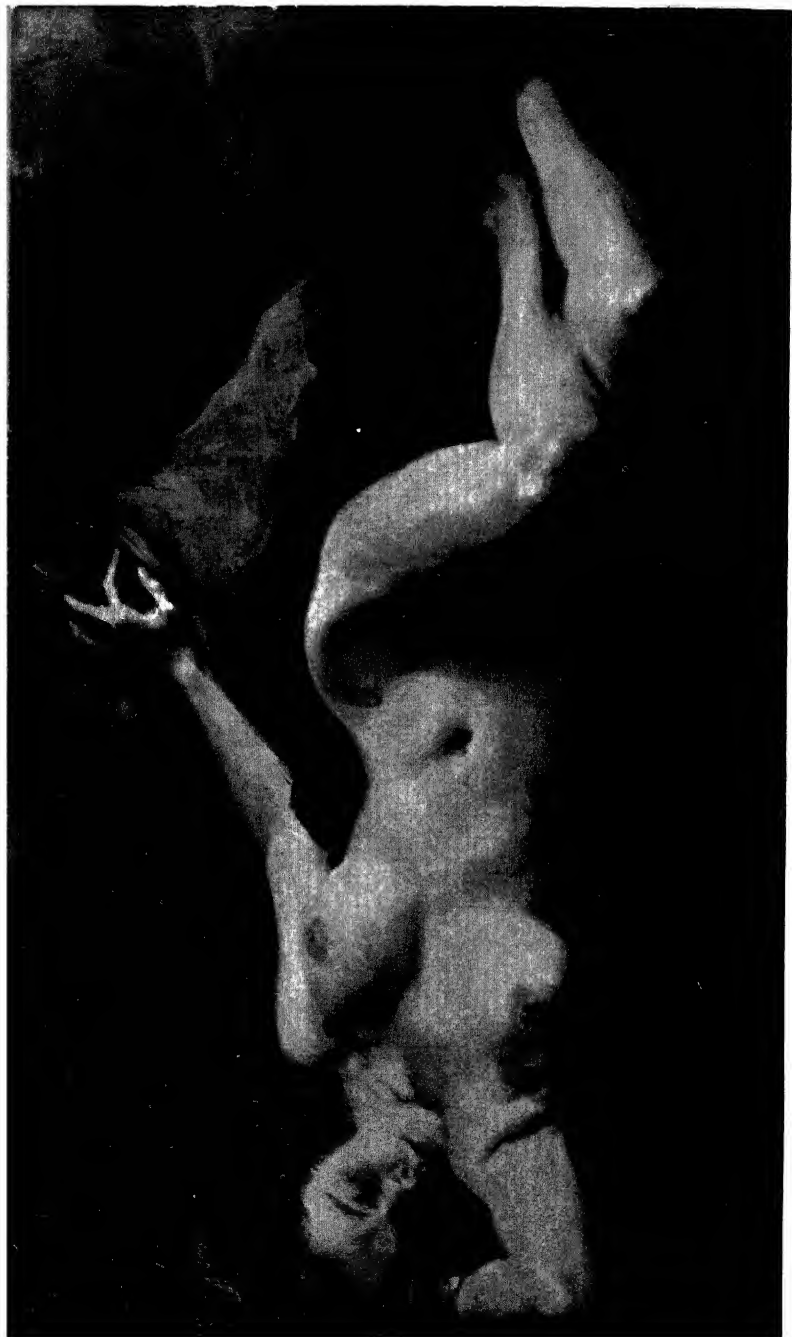
She was, like most women, secretive, and it was hard to guess what was going on in her mind. Shortly after this crisis she cheered up and that was that.

Michael Whalen, the actor (born Joe Shovlin), was my model at that period and we three went about together a good deal, in work and at play. Reg Simpson had been my model and pal for a number of years and when he migrated to the Coast, leaving a tearful regiment of girls who went to the Grand Central to see him off, Jo had taken his place. It was Ilse and Jim and Joe all around the town. It would have been the usual thing under such intimate circumstances—for Joe was young and handsome and attractive to women and I was old enough to be the father of both of them—for some high-class chiseling to have occurred. But the tie between Ilse and me at that time was strong enough to nullify the usual.

As time marched on I learned a lot about this girl's strange life. She had been brought over here from Hamburg at the age of four, and from snapshots of her at that age I would have adored her then. She had lived for a while in Texas, but at her father's death she was taken back to Hamburg by her crazy mother, and she went through the German postwar revolution with its terrors and privations. She was sent to market through streets that often echoed with bullets. She and her younger sister, a pretty but utterly selfish little girl, were brought back again to this country. This was when Ilse was eleven years old, and the Hoffmanns went to live in Brooklyn where Ilse got an excellent education at Erasmus High. Her lunatic mother was taken to jail for shooting a revolver off in the hall of their apartment building; whether she was aiming at anyone or not, Ilse



Portrait of Ilse Hoffmann by J.M.F.



Nude of Ilse Hoffmann by J.M.F.

didn't seem to know. At any rate the daughters were then put in some sort of institutional school where they had a pretty thin time. To make a few extra dimes Ilse took jobs as a "sitter" and minded the brats of mothers who had to play pinochle or bridge at night. It meant traveling at late hours on trolleys to the wastelands of Darkest Brooklyn and spending a third of her hard-earned "sitter" pittance on transportation.

She also sold papers and magazines in subway kiosks; and was for a time a ticket seller in cheap movie houses. With such a sordid background it was a marvel that she could smile at all. I can understand why she feared life more than death.

But she was gentle, she had endearing little ways, foolish loving jests. She always called me "Jibby" as if she had a cold in her head. I answered the phone once and heard little watery noises that sounded like "Mop, mop, mop . . .," not words, just faraway sounds. I said: "Who is it?" A voice said: "A goldfish!" She spoke English with no accent whatever except that Continental "r"—she said, "Don't be *cwool*, Jibby!" I used to think up sentences for her to say that had the "r" in them, because it was fascinating to me to hear her say it.

She had a great love of books, favoring those with a morbid side to them in pictures and drama, and her taste also ran to the macabre. She always wanted me to paint her as a corpse with lit candles at her head. And yet she had a gay, subtle humor. I tried to interest her in Gilbert & Sullivan but she said: "No, that's just tinkle-tinkle to me." I was pleased later on when she was honest enough to say, "Well, Jibby, you're right, I am beginning to understand G. & S. It's wonderful!"

We had a rule in the Artists and Writers Club that during the week of the golf tournament at Palm Beach every February, no one could bring along any wives, sweethearts or other females and I rigidly obeyed the rule. I had to, for I was one of the governors who had made it! But I got Ilse's tickets and reservations for Palm Beach and reserved a room for her at the hotel before I left N.Y. with the mob, and she was set to arrive the day after the tournament was over. The early morning of

her arrival was for me always the high spot of those trips. The Time, the Place—lovely Palm Beach—and the Girl—the only girl! Then we'd spend a week in a sort of dream, in the sunshine, bathing, drinking when we felt like it . . . going to parties, to the Colony, the Patio, friends' houses, bicycling with those of my crowd who had stayed on.

When Ilse came on the beach in her tight-fitting robin's-egg-blue bathing suit and danced about in the inch-high incoming waves she stopped the beach chatter. Morrison, the golf expert, took a hundred feet of moving pictures of this indescribable nymph in all her lovely grace and sent me a print. I took it up one night to Ham Fisher's to have him project it for me on his screen. When it came on it was a scene of a hundred dismal businessmen in aprons at a beefsteak dinner. Morrison had sent me the wrong reel. I used language that seared the curtains, but later it began to seem terribly funny. When finally I did get the right reel a hundred feet was far too short. Ilse, far from being an exhibitionist, wasn't putting on an act; but being nearsighted, she wasn't conscious of the giggling mob on the beach.

After about three years there came a change in our relations—a shadow hard to define or know when it began. A contributing cause may have been because I treated her like a child; then a growing feeling on her part that she wanted to get married. I didn't. I had had all that sort of life I could stand. Besides which I *couldn't* get a divorce, and I did not learn till years later that I could have had my second marriage annulled. Gradually Ilse's attitude toward me began to change. While she was just as affectionate as ever, still she began making me look silly in public by childish tricks—like taking my glasses in restaurants or at parties and hiding them. This became a regular thing, and I was annoyed. She had a way of yanking my shirt up and giggling to a whole dance floor. "See, he hasn't any navell!" Which was silly but rather funny, too. I laughed the first time. She did quite a lot of drinking in the evenings, and that always "accentuates the positive," which in

her case was love of her fellow man. And her fellow man invariably took advantage of her weakness. Ham Fisher gave a big party in his apartment when he lived on the floor above me and lots of people dripped down into my place during the revels. I walked into my own studio to find Ilse lying in the arms of Cosmo Hamilton, who was sitting in a corner of my big sofa with lots of other people. I couldn't blame Cozzie! Then at a big drunk at Sadie Murry's, who gave terrific parties, I came back upstairs from answering the phone on their lower floor and in the barroom was Ilse asleep with her nose buried in Spike Hunt's manly bosom. I asked her what the hell and she sat up and had the nerve to smile and say: "I thought it was you!" She was so cute I never could stay mad at her.

Once when Ilse was ill with pleurisy I was on my way down to see her. She wouldn't have a nurse but preferred to have the ministrations of some girl friends while she lay in bed recovering. I went to several drugstores on my way down, and at last found an enameled bedpan. I felt that it would be a sensible present. A handsome young man, who was a bit love-struck and came from a distinguished old New York family, was there on her doormat with a bunch of flowers when I arrived. Ilse and her friends gave me the horse laugh. Bedpans and Roses.

More ominous signs appeared. Ilse moved into a new apartment—always in the Village—and decorated it in a modernistic manner. I painted a flower piece and framed it all in white to fit her mood. I was really hurt when I later found this water-color turned to the wall at the baseboard of her entrance hall. She had spurned it. When I asked if she'd give me an extra key to her apartment she refused with obviously false excuses. I reminded her that she had a key to my place that made her welcome at any time, night or day. I told her I had no notion of using it, that I wanted her to make the gesture. Nothing doing. Then I knew. Really knew. She was no longer my love.

The final *coup de grâce* actually came later. There had been weeks of strange tension. I called her. No answer. I went down—

town to the bank, thinking about her all the time. I called again, and again. Then I was worried. I sensed something was wrong. I went to her apartment in Christopher Street. They said she didn't answer. I wandered to all the eating places near by, thinking she might be breakfasting somewhere. Then I returned to her apartment building. A sympathetic bellhop said she must be in since her mail was still in her box. He called her again. No answer. Then I told him I was worried, that she might be ill. I really thought that. I asked him if he'd take a master key and open her door. He said he would and did.

I stepped in and saw a young man sitting in the living room. Out of the bathroom came Ilse fastening up her dress. I looked at her.

"This is Mr. — (whatever his name was)," she said.

"Yes, I was worried for fear you might be ill," I said, "and I wanted to take you to lunch."

"I have an engagement for lunch," she said.

I said I was sorry and walked out. I tipped the kind bellhop and floundered out into the street. I walked and walked, uptown, not really knowing where I was going. I was hurt to death. Why couldn't she have told me? To let it happen in that vulgar though classical way! I honestly don't know where I went in my bewildered sorrow, but late that afternoon when I at last went into my studio... the first thing I saw on my drawing chair was a plain heavy gold bangle, and a key. Ilse had been there. She had returned it.

I was saturated with contempt and disgust for Ilse. That was my first reaction. I said to myself: "I truly loved Ilse. No other woman has meant a thing to me—from the moment I saw her."

Eventually she married this young man, who was some sort of stock market runner. Yes, she was a married woman. She'd got what she desired. A wedding ring. But the poor dear was stung, although she had known the pup for years and had gone to lunch with him in Wall Street every so often. At first she

used to refer to him as a "person," until I pinned her down to "man."

Women are usually incredulous if you tell them it ain't going to work. Several months later from her new love-through-marriage apartment she called me and asked me to take her out. Out of sheer maliciousness I did. Although she would always interest me I no longer cared. She quietly laughed at her husband as he stood on the low stoop of their dingy east-side apartment where I met her to take her to dinner. I felt sorry for him. He wasn't enough for Ilse. She didn't want money. Poverty was nothing new to her. She didn't quite know what she did want. But this lad turned out to be someone she definitely didn't want to sit home with by the fireside, which was his idea of how it should be. Then after the first vicious amusement of seeing her treat her husband like filth, I quit seeing her.

I had put her through the School of Photography, where she at once became the prize pupil, some time before, so she would have a profession to live by in case I was mistaken for a parking space by a taxi. But the money I put in the bank for her, for emergencies, had been used to pay for her sister's wedding. Ilse was always too kind.

Still, she did become a distinguished photographer; so much so that my pal, Al Pach, the photographer, plans to have her prints permanently preserved. Ilse had imagination, technical superiority and exquisite taste. Except in men.

12. THE BEAUTIFUL KATHLEEN, LONDON, HAM FISHER, AND THE DEATH OF ILSE

IN 1936 the *Queen Mary* had been launched and her wonders publicized. I had sworn the last time I returned from abroad that I would never venture on the Atlantic again, and I had kept my word for twenty-five years; but the *Queen Mary* sounded as steady as Staten Island with twin screws. Knowing my dad's deep affection for London, and my own, I made a resolution. I have spoken of my fear of the ocean in spite of thirty-six trips I have made over its treacherous bosom. But I thought to myself, I'm getting old and haven't much to live for since Ilse has left me. Then a different, excited mood came over me and I went across the hall to my father's and said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"You are eighty-one and you haven't such a hell of a long time to go on living. If you could do just what you'd like to do—what would you do?" I knew full well what the answer would be as he smiled a slow smile and said:

"You know!"

"I sure do!" I said. "Well—we'll do it. You and I—on the *Queen Mary*—in July! And only on the condition that we do it the best way, on the best ship."

I cabled the Savoy for a double room and, as I first had to go to Hollywood on a job, my father attended to passports and to getting the cabin on the *Queen*. Then we sailed on a sentimental journey. My father said afterwards that these two trips

(we did it again in '37) were the finest times he ever had in his life!

We had a beautiful big cabin with big beds and a bath. We had just started down the Narrows and were sitting in our cabin reading telegrams when a steward brought in a rose growing in a pot and handed it to me. The card said "Ilse."

The shock was terrible. I had a paroxysm with a sudden mad impulse to jump overboard. My dad knew there was nothing he could say. So he just sat and waited. I finally controlled myself. I walked out of my torture chamber, locked the door, and stalked back into my Reckless Room, or Laughing Parlor.

Being the particular kind of a jackass I am, I needed the sympathy and affection of a beautiful woman. So when Ilse ditched me I didn't hesitate about leaving myself wide open emotionally. Naturally I laughed at the romantic notion that people only love once, although I do think there is generally one tops of all. In my case Ilse was the tops. One sure sign of her waning interest in me was her calling my attention to the charms of other women. She did this in the case of Kathleen Parkhurst of the D'Oyly Carte Co. I had already met this beautiful English girl and Ilse had photographed her and said to me:

"Now there, Jibby, is the kind of woman for you—more your type than I am!"

It hadn't been so awfully long before that that Ilse, after a letter I wrote her from Palm Beach, had sat in a chair in her kitchen, turned on the gas in her range. The thing that saved her was a telephone call from Ham Fisher. The ring startled her out of her near asphyxia just enough to make her roll off her chair and knock open the door, which wasn't closed securely, into her living room. She never threatened suicide, she just kept on trying it. Never spoke of it. Never. The only way I knew about it was from Ham and Ilse's sister.

It was in this *je m'en fiche* period that I was watching the incomparable D'Oyly Carte Company performing the *Pirates* from a box with Russell Patterson and I noticed in the back

row of the chorus an extraordinarily beautiful girl. I got in touch with Hobbs, the stage manager, between acts and told him I wanted to paint her portrait in that costume. He said it could be arranged; why didn't I write her a note? I said, thinking about American chorus dames:

"By the way, is she a lady?"

"Definitely, Mr. Flagg."

This, of course, she was. Her father, whom I had to lunch at the Savoy later, was a distinguished doctor from Sussex. I painted her portrait in the *Penzance* costume and we became very dear friends at once. And that intense romance lasted a couple of years.

So Kathleen was expecting me when the *Queen* arrived in England. We had had a marvelous four-day crossing. Dad took his gin and Schweppes before lunch with me and some other men in the bar and on the last night he went with the crowd up to the forward barroom on the top deck and batted balloons at pretty ladies with the gayest of them. He had three champagne cocktails and when we went below at 3:30 A.M. he astonished us all by stretching out his arms and sliding on his palms down the bannisters.

Kathleen was waiting for me at Waterloo. The D'Oyly Carte Company was appearing at Sadler's Wells, so that night I saw the *Mikado* in a front row seat as I always had in New York. There was my tall, chesty, beautiful Kathleen made up as a Jap such as never was in baleful Nippon. She said her chorus friends were much amused at my saying I couldn't hear them but could only see their mouths working as if they were chewing gum. And there, of course, was that dear Martyn Green, the handsome comedian of the company. The year before, when the company was making such a tremendous hit at the Martin Beck, I was the chairman of the entertainment committee of the Lotos Club and with Arthur Hopkins we gave a dinner for the sixty-nine members of the D'Oyly Carte Company. At that time I had never seen Martyn out of makeup, which is the reason for a funny incident later at the dinner. I

had made a penanink drawing for the menu showing him as the elegant Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., on board H.M.S. *Pinafore* and in two clouds above him were heads of Gilbert and Sullivan. I got Martyn to pose for me in full regalia, monocle and all, and he came up to my studio in a cab already made up and in uniform with sword and wig, as the elderly Sir Joseph. On the night of the dinner, I had the principals at the dais table and I was toastmaster, so I looked around the table, stood up and looked again and said:

"There is a most important someone missing. This is very strange—*where is Martyn Green?*"

A grinning, handsome young man opposite me said quietly:

"You're looking right at him, Monty!" Then I realized that I had never seen him, save with a wonderful makeup job, and had no idea of his age.

It was a great evening and my guest William S. Hart was given a heartfelt ovation by those English people who knew and loved the great movie cowboy hero as we did in America.

It was fun seeing my G. & S. friends on their home grounds. So much happened in those two summers with my father in London that I am a bit confused as to which things occurred in which summer.

Dad had to go round to the American Express in the Haymarket, of course, to check up on his old offices and let them make a fuss over him. Naturally in twenty-five years most of the personnel had changed. Still they knew who he was and that he'd been the manager for ten years, and there was actually an old porter who had been there with him—who recalled that he had taken my sister's trunk to the station with a placard bearing two enormous red hearts I had painted, when she was a going-away bride. Then we took a cab and drove down to South Kensington and stopped for five minutes outside his old house—just in line with the path that led to the garden in the back where we used to fight over croquet in the twilights! With the bats flying about. Then on to Northgate, overlooking Regent's Park, to a flat he had later had. The very apartment

he and Mother had rented was vacant at the moment, so we walked slowly through. Then we went up on the roof where they used to watch the cricket games at Lord's just over the coping. Dad was doing a lot of remembering—a sweet sadness.

My sister Margaret, for whom I hadn't the slightest use, was a beautiful and utterly selfish typical American girl. She married a couple of Englishmen. The first one was a good-looking rotter, a Cambridge man, rich and very smart. He had never packed a suitcase or ridden on a bus in his life. Margaret explained that he was round-shouldered as the result of driving a car all the time! She divorced him for excellent reasons, but she had to be slapped in the presence of the butler besides. That was the law then. I think A. P. Herbert had the English divorce laws made a spot less medieval at a later date.

They had issue—a son Teddy, who canceled everything untoward in his immediate background. A more lovable, handsome giant there never was! He had a great and spontaneous affection for his grandpappy, and vice versa. He is six foot five; a Cambridge man, which didn't seem to be detrimental in his case. And he did everything he could to give Dad a good time. I came in on some of it in a minor way as his uncle. Dad was his special favorite, which was as it should have been. He entertained us... dinners, suppers, after the theater. His lovely Italian wife came up from their country house in Mersea on the North Sea for an evening at the theater, and one day Teddy drove us down to Mersea and Dad met and completely fell for his four great-granddaughters. We had roast beef with the best Yorkshire pudding I ever ate.

Ham Fisher had promised me he would go to England that summer if I did. He didn't show up and I got no word—which is typical of Ham—even though he knew I had reserved a room for him at the Savoy.

Now Ham is one of my best-loved friends. But when we were together in a radio thing called *Celebrity Minstrels* he told the audience—"Just call me Stinky!" Perfect self-evaluation. I have known Ham many years and we've had continuous

pleasure insulting each other in private and in public. His mind is like a steel trap; so is his pocket. He carries a twenty-dollar bill which he uses as insurance against paying for taxis. He is so keen, so well informed; his wit is sharp and his imaginative humor is boundless—it is incredible that none of all this ever gets into his strip of “comic stuff” called *Palooka*. It is a series that millions of otherwise intelligent people look forward to with bated breath. The babyish excitement all these newspaper “Funnies” evoke is a phenomenon I can’t understand. I vaguely know the names of some of them—*Awful Annie*, *Dysentery* and *the Pirates*—it’s a national disease. Webster’s Mr. Milquetoast and his others are the only cartoons that seem to me to have real humor and satire. Ham’s *Palooka* is so Palookative that I do not need to apologize.

When a striptician’s strip has become successful he stops even pretending to draw and he openly admits that his stooges do all the work. Then all he has to do is to try to keep as small a percentage of his income as possible from going to the Collector of Internal Revenue as he is now in the higher rackets. He steams around trying to look important—I am referring entirely to Ham—and mysterious and overworked; and even though I can hardly blame him I must say I deplore his letting out military secrets like the fact that Roosevelt and he won the war against the Germans.

Ham is the world’s foremost Table-Hopper, the Champion of the Stork Club! Now, Al Pach is a stationary table-hopper; he accomplishes all of his social contacts without leaving his seat, through smiles, nods and stuff, much more urbane and subtle; but Ham is the real physical-type hopper. He starts in the minute he sits down with his guests, with his Norden bombsight; he leaps to another table, and from table to table, with intense, close-leaning, intimate camaraderie and a “Hiya Babel!” or “Whaddaya know, Big Boy!” He knows everybody and works like a beaver to make everybody know him. He will put up with all sorts of jerks, just to add to his popularity. He

promises anything; and when he forgets, he makes it seem that *you* were somehow to blame!

He often tells the story of how I cabled him to come right over to the Savoy in London, and he has added so much appliqué, Irish lace, needlepoint, galloon, candle tufts and chenille to it that I don't recognize the incident.

But the facts were that I cabled him that the Savoy couldn't hold his room much longer; that he didn't answer my cable but got onto the *Normandie* and that he and Marlene Dietrich took over the entertaining of the ship's trip and that he was presented with a handsome medal by the skipper for same. He landed at Cherbourg and went to the George Sank in Paris with a beautiful blonde grass widow—and completely forgot me and the Savoy—which could be quite understandable once you saw the widow. I only heard that Ham had sailed through a cable from his kind mother. I put in a call for him at his hotel. He was startled and dropped everything, except the widow, and came across the Channel immediately to London. The widow went discreetly to the Dorchester. She was the former wife of a former famous star of the mute-movie era and she had everything—beauty, charm, money and was *comme il faut*—if that means what I think it does. We four dined together at places including a joint in Soho which specialized in green spaghetti. Father was charmed with the lady. My dear dad likes to imagine he is a man of the world. Not that he would say such a thing. Ham once had good taste. He slipped later. So did Barrymore.

Teddy drove us one day up to his country club at Maidenhead (what a name!) on the Thames, in the rain of course. Ham Fisher was with us and at lunch he and Teddy vied with each other in sleight-of-hand and card tricks, both astonishing each other and discovering that they both belonged to some magician's fraternal organization.

Ham liked and admired this six-five nephew of mine—said he was the best-looking and best-dressed man in London. Our

quartet had a lot of fun together. We played that amazing game of "Baffle" wherever we happened to be.

Ham begged me not to tell anyone it was his first trip to London, and no one would have imagined it the way he slipped easily into the gay life of the Season. How he managed these things I will never know. He calls himself Fisher the well-dressed Ham, and he is. It was astonishing how this chunky little Wilkes-Barre cartoonist—"two pair of shoulders in one pair of pants," someone called him—knew which was the most fashionable carcass-drawer in Savile Row, which was the best-bespoke boot and shoemaker, the smartest shirtmaker, the last word in makers of riding breeches; and he'd never been here before. The small-town spirit reared its simple head once in a while, as for instance in his impulse to overemphasize the glory of his wardrobe.

Good taste is a very curious and subtle acquisition and so entirely a matter of opinion. Unlike a creative artist, no one is born with it. It seems to me a case of trial and error. Some very rare people have good taste in everything. Many have good taste in some things and not in other things. I knew a woman, very rich, who never erred in her house furnishings; always made exquisite rooms, but was in her dress rather specious to the point of vulgarity. The contrast between her home and her clothes was really unbelievable.

Ham boasted of being a pal of many young peers and a frequenter of exclusive clubs; he specially referred to "White's." He will tell you incredible things about his noted friends and sensational things that have happened to him. It is even more disconcerting when you find it's all so.

But then this paradoxical Pennsylvanian will unblushingly tell the most arrant whoppers . . . about, for instance, unimportant little matters like breaking engagements. He doesn't rush in where angels fear to tread; he just tells the angels to stop worrying and come on in with him.

We were strolling through the Burlington Arcade where high-class totties, pretending to be looking *through* the shop

windows, are really watching reflections, and Hammy still wanted to buy things. I said, "Well what about some old English silver?" Then I said abruptly: "No, I withdraw that suggestion, it wouldn't be much good to you!" "Why, what do you mean, Monty?" I shrugged and said: "You couldn't wear it." He called me a dirty name.

Ham was wandering about at four A.M. and went into one of those cab shelters in the middle of the street and had a sorsidge an' a raoll an' a cuppa cawfee with a constable who told him, this was 1936, when Hitler would attack London. And the constable was right!

On our return trip to New York, Ham was in constant touch by phone with his last blonde, or at any rate, for the first two days with the Dorchester in London. On the last two days he was talking to the brunette in Deal, N. J., who had determined to marry him. While Ham was in the usual throes of Customs, "What do you think his first words to me were?" Miss Graham said to me tearfully. I said I'd leave it to her. "He said, you look like hell!" she sobbed. As a matter of fact it was one of those steaming New York August days when only extra-special women could look well! And so they married.

I had to go to Hollywood again the following spring to do a drawing in color of Madeleine Carroll for Selznick, and I took the Old Puritan with me; it was a short stay this time, four days; and we stayed at the Ambassador, my favorite hostelry. Leon Gordon was also staying there and he was putting on a very bad show. It was too bad that, for no earthly reason, he was silly enough to insult my dad, so I was through from that moment. I told Dad that I had a number of friends in Hollywood who would insist on my going out and getting crocked with them. As I knew he was allergic to that sort of thing I was sure he wouldn't mind going to bed sober at his regular time and that I was sure he understood my predicament.

"Of course," he said, "think nothing of it, I'll be perfectly all right . . . go ahead."

The payoff was that *he* was invited to all the parties. We

came back to the hotel each night in the morning. He had a grand time, especially at Colleen's big rout. She had opened up her huge place just to throw a party. "Everyone" was there, including Dad. And they made a fuss about him.

"That's not *really* your father!" People would say. I would say,

"No, I just rent him from the casting agency." . . . "Looks like a father type, don't you think? He's in his third childhood and I am only in my second, in spite of my looking a bit older than he does which is on account he has led a much cleaner life."

Sweet Colleen had half the stars of yesterday and today on deck, but the one who intrigued my friend father the most was a great favorite of mine always—Virginia Valle. She was so beautiful and only a mite lit, and she did an impromptu Hawaiian dance which rolled the Puritan in the aisles in the nicest way.

He enjoyed watching Ronald Colman doing some scenes on the *Prisoner of Zenda* set. Colman seemed to me a bit more British than absolutely necessary, but grand old crag-faced Aubrey Smith was human and he and Dad hit it off.

In July we sailed again on the *Queen* and back to the Savoy. I made five penanink drawings for Harrod's clothes ads, the models being provided by them, one being a lovely employee. I brought her a beautiful peach, as large as a small grapefruit, with an embarrassed blush on one cheek. It was a peach such as is never seen in America; in a square box just fitting it. I handed it to her remarking that it was a portrait of her! I thought to myself an American beauty would have appreciated that crack! Not this one. She muffed it, saying, "Thankyo so metch!"

I did a lot of water-colors this summer, and Freddy Price and my exuberant friend Morris Gest came up to our room to see some of the London ones I'd done. They made no impression whatever on Freddy, he being an art dealer and thinking of nothing but money. But Gest, being warm-blooded, raved about them and when he was introduced to my dad cried: "So

you are Jim's father!" and kissed the Old Puritan on his astonished New England cheek!

The Savoy lobby is a sure place to run into old friends, like big Bill Tilden and Ted Husing and Wheeler Williams, the sculptor, with his gorgeous wife Margie—the latter were staying at what was considered a "smarter" hotel. It seems that an artist who has veddy rich and ritzy patrons must take on their coloring and behavior. So Dad and I were asked to a supper party by the Williamses and as usual I wore a pink shirt instead of the regulation white one, with my dinner jacket. Wheeler said one of his English guests said to him:

"I say, tell me, does your friend Flagg know whether this is afternoon or evening?"

Which was quate fenny! Naturally the Britisher (shades of Agincourt and Crécy) would never think of wearing pink armor, I mean to say.

One of the newspaper interviewers who called on me at the Savoy was very beautiful. I wanted to draw her, and the quietest place seemed to be her digs in Red Lion Court way up in the City. My taxi couldn't drive all the way into the Court, it was too narrow. She lived in a shabby medieval doll's house at the top of one flight of stairs in two tiny rooms. There was hardly space for me to sit far enough away to draw her. After sending the landlady around to the pub to get us a couple of gin and "Its," she posed for me and told me about interviewing Marlene Dietrich and her other jobs on the paper. She was trying to get them to send her to Spain; she said she would go anyway, for she wanted to fight Franco. I gave her my sketch portrait of her, and it was printed along with her interview with me in her paper. It seemed strange that the leading interviewer of the *Sunday Chronicle* was paid so poorly she had to live in this doghouse. The girl wanted to live in her own way—poverty and her beauty meant little to her, which made her something like Ilse. She dreamt of fighting against tyrants. Her name was Alyne Allward, a pretty name. I had a vision of her

lying battered and broken on a pile of rubble in a Madrid alley. I hope she got back to London unharmed.

I saw Teddy and his grandfather when they drove off to Mersea in Teddy's midget car. Why should this outsize nephew of mine choose such an absurd little soap dish to squeeze himself into? I had to look down into it to say goodbye to them.

Then Kathleen and I went to Devon. I to paint water-colors and she to sit or stand in my landscapes—they "looked good on her." I did a water-color every day (they generally take me three hours), and when we came back to the Red Lion Hotel in the late afternoon with my kit we'd freshen up and then go down to the bar and have a few John Haigs, doubles, while we looked over old copies of *Punch* with our heads together.

Katie had a lovely sense of the ridiculous. I had been in Devon many years before, but I had forgotten how poor the celebrated Devonshire cream was, and we shifted to raw cream at once. The sides of the cliffs of Devon and all the earth thereabouts was, unlike the white cliffs of Dover, a pinkish red, and the flocks of sheep on the moors were all pink which made them look fantastic. I told Katie that it was easy to see where her pink sweater came from. "Jumper," I mean.

An American naval fleet was anchored at the time a few miles off shore from Torquay. When we went over to Torquay of an evening the little town was full of American sailors. We found a pub and had our John Haigs, very exclusive-like, because of a glass screen that sort of shut us off from the crowd at the other angle of the bar where the American sailors swapped smoke and beer with the limeys. Then we piled in with the crowd to see Shirley Temple at the cinema. I asked some nice Yanks if any one of them knew Commander (now Rear Admiral) Turner Joy. No, they didn't. I explained that I was interested to know if he was with that fleet, as I had taught him to ride a bicycle when he was four years old, up in Biddeford Pool, Maine. They didn't believe me, of course, and were naturally more interested in gazing very respectfully over my shoulder at Kathleen in the next seat. I preferred it

myself. I thought, what a marvel it was in this evil stupid world that I could rest and clean my eyes and mind by seeing such loveliness at my side.

Sometimes when I was painting and had done Katie's figure in my landscape, she would get bored and would go into the village and find a music store and a piano where she could do some practicing until I had finished. We went back to London, I to check up on Dad and see that he was happy, and Kathleen to go down to Newhaven in Sussex and check up on her family. Then we were off again, this time to Edinburgh on the Flying Scotsman. What a train! Its swiftness and its Old World elegance make the Twentieth Century seem crass! And I'm no Anglomaniac.

When we arrived in London, Euston I think it was, Kathleen immediately spied an elegant worldly-looking gent pointing out his suitcases to a porter.

"I should go over and speak to him," she said. "It's Sir Richard D'Oyly Carte."

"Of course, if you think you should," I said.

"Do you want to come over and meet him, Mont-Mont?" "Not particularly," I said. "Why should I?" After all, she added, Katie was a lowly member of the chorus and he was the Mr. Big.

I persuaded Katie to leave nine of her eleven suitcases home this trip by explaining to her that she couldn't possibly need all the clothes she had saved since she was thirteen. We were only going to Scotland for a week or ten days. I made a number of water-colors in that beautiful old town where most of the men look like R. L. Stevenson and the women look like foxes. We took a taxi driven by a fatherly, bespectacled Scot, and went into the high hills above Edinburgh. I asked him what that body of water way off over the hills was. He said, "The Firth o' Forth." I wondered why he couldn't make up his mind which. Then I painted Dunsappie Loch, a little, deep-blue pond he said was bottomless. I put one of the two swans in the picture and Kathleen sitting on the bank. She scrambled up the

slope to look at it. The old driver came and examined it, and turned to Kathleen and nodded his old head and said to her: "That's vurra gude of ye, my dear!" There was a sharp contrast between the city taxi driver and his two fares and the three tame people in this wild place. Same people, but what a change.

On the way home on the *Queen* there was the traditional concert for the seamen's benefit and I made a drawing of lovely Sally Eilers which was auctioned off by Sir Cedric Hardwicke, and as his was the highest bid he bought it and promptly put it up again for auction and got more money for the sailors. On that same trip I met Dick Hoffmann, psychiatrist and charming gent, and we've been friends ever since. I particularly enjoyed a story of his about when he was a young doctor and wanted to join an exclusive Jewish club uptown. A famous surgeon was sponsoring him, and the two of them were lunching in some well-known restaurant one day when a financially important department store mogul came over to their table. The surgeon said: "Do you know Dr. Richard Hoffmann?" This mogul foolishly stuck his neck out. He squinted at Dick and said:

"Veterinarian?"

"Yes, you son of a bitch, come in and see me!" said Dick through his teeth.

The answer seems to be that Jews of German antecedents are contemptuous of those of Russian ancestry. But on the other hand some of my best *Jews* are *friends*. On returning home I learned that Ilse had divorced husband number one and had married another unimportant young man, named Callahan, and that she was now saving up enough money to divorce *him!*

She then went to Miami and lived with a couple of pansies in some cheap apartment. I believe they had two beds and a mattress and odd man slept on the mattress on the floor. Or so she said. She came up on the bus from Miami for the day when I was at Palm Beach. She told me of seeing Leon Gordon, who had become a sort of beachcomber cadging drinks in bars.

Maybe he had deteriorated enough to become a Gauguin. When Ilse came back north she was making \$300 weekly, supervising photos for a Chicago mail-order house.

We began seeing each other quite often and it seemed as if we were coming together again slowly as a couple of singed cats might warily try to know each other after a fire. She said, "I really was the only one who 'spoke her language.'" But, of course, it could never be like old times. I knew she was involved with some young architect. I phoned her one evening and asked her to sup with me, but she said she couldn't go out as she was expecting a long-distance call. I said still she'd need to eat, so how about my bringing in some deviled crabs and stuff from the Lotos Club. She thought that would be fine. She had a kitchenette and was able to serve our supper hot, and we had a rather happy time; in the front part of our minds. She put a stack of records on her Victrola, ones she had just bought. She sewed a bit, finishing a dress she had been making for herself. Her sister Pessie was an expert designer and told Ilse the dress she was making was as well done as a professional *couturière* could do it. We were laughing and chatting and Ilse told about some complaint or trouble that Pessie had. I can't recall what it was, but she laughed as she told me she had suggested that her sister take some cyanide of potassium. This grim gibe seemed an amusing thing to Ilse. As it got near eleven I decided to go, as I didn't want to be there when her telephone rang. As I said good night and had gone a few feet down the hall, she came after me and I turned. She clasped me tight and kissed me.

The next morning my phone rang and it was Pessie speaking in a strangled sort of voice.

"Ilse killed herself," she said. "Cyanide of potassium, in a wine glass, I found her lying naked under a sheet."

I said when I could speak:

"That goddamned architect said something; he was to call her long-distance."

Then the spasm of grief hit me of the same kind that came

to me over that growing rose on the *Queen Mary*. I couldn't bear to stay alone in my studio. I had to get out, go somewhere. I wanted help from somebody, somehow; a friend. I thought of Ham Fisher first. I called him and told him. He said, "Catch the first train up here to Weston. I'll meet you at the station . . . hurry."

I'm afraid I put on a poor show. Ham, with his great affection and inborn tact, saw me through the worst of it. Tact is such a beautiful social grace . . . so much depends on knowing what *not* to do.

Poor, hag-ridden, beautiful Ilse. She had succeeded the fifth time in her several efforts of self-destruction. It's in the German blood. If the *bulk* of that race would destroy themselves, the world would be better off.

The medicos of the insane hospitals tell me that insanity is not hereditary but is contagious. That's nice to know . . . or to hear. Ilse's mother had wrapped linked dog-chains around the family refrigerator and locked the ends with a big padlock, then unwound it every time she wanted a piece of butter and then wound it all around again and padlocked it. Ilse's grandmother and great-grandmother hanged themselves. It seems like a family Ibsen might have thought up. There is a sinister lot of craziness in more families than people like to admit. Poor, lovely, lovable, silent Ilse. Never more! In my mind that ridiculous, sonorous, insanely rhythmic "Raven" of Poe's is linked with my Ilse; a lost Lenore!

13. CONCERNED WITH NOTES ABOUT MORE AND LESS KNOWN PEOPLE

I HAVE MET A number of redheaded doctors and surgeons, and in most cases they have handsome wives. It is an amusing phenomenon as anyone can check by observation. One surgeon, lately Lieutenant Commander McCabe, is married to one of the most beautiful women in the world—May.

Elliott White Springs—he has dropped the “White” lately, probably feeling that by now his public must know that he wasn’t colored—always insisted upon my illustrating his stories, which were chock full of wine, women and fantastic adventures. He was brilliant, bawdy and amusing and I had fun doing these mad tales of his. He used to laughingly complain that I didn’t illustrate the hottest spots. I reminded him, in a fatherly way, that in publishing in an Anglo-Saxon country sex has to be bowdlerized for the hypocrites. If only he had had the good fortune to be banned in Boston. By God’s gift to authors—the Watch and Ward Society!

Springs was an ace in the World War in which fracas pilots never thought of going up into battle sober. He wrote the sensational book *War Birds* and then kept on writing, much to his dad’s disgust as he wanted Elliott to come home to Fort Mill, S.C., and take over the big cotton mill and the railroads. Nevertheless it took the young fighter quite a while to get acclimated to peace. Although I liked him, Springs’ attitude toward the world so irritated me at one period that I wrote

him we didn't talk the same language and that I didn't want to see any more of him. He used to fly up to New York every so often in his own plane with two suitcases: one filled with manuscripts and the other metal-lined and filled with "corn"! He absolutely ignored my letter and breezed into my studio after having seen his old friend Frank Godwin on the floor above. He said casually—"Oh yes, I have a message for you from my wife." I asked him what. He said, "She said—tell Jimmy Flagg to go to hell!" I knew that she must have read my letter. All wives read all letters, even if they have to steam them open. I declined a drink—I didn't like "corn." He asked me where I had had it, and I told him in Atlanta and that it was white and smelt like summer garbage. He laughed. "It wasn't aged." He got a glass out of my bathroom; where the tub was filled with old canvases. (I never used it as I didn't live there.) He filled the glass with what looked like licorice water and with some misgivings I tasted it. It was like the best Bourbon. I finished the glass. Once at the bar at the Stork I met Springs and had some drinks with him and a predatory female. He said, "This is my fourteenth mint julep. I have to fly tonight to Portland, I cannot remember if it is Portland, Oregon, or Portland, Maine." Since then he has taken over his dad's mill and made it, I understand, into the biggest cotton mill in the South.

Ham Fisher and I are both vice-presidents of the Lancaster & Chester R.R. with business cards, note paper, and envelopes with our names as v.p.'s printed on them. Ham once solemnly exchanged one of his cards with a railroad executive he got talking with on a train. These two railroad men got on well after that. Ham didn't let on.

Springs bought Charlie Schwab's old private car with its gold beds and stuffed satin chairs, and used it for parties. The back of this Lancaster & Chester note paper is filled with a map of the eastern states showing the railroad lines. In large type is announced—"The Lancaster & Chester R.R. and connecting railroads." The L & C is thirty miles long.

I visited Ham once at his house in Miami and we went over to the Roney-Plaza and up the long stone stairs to the swimming pool. The place was crowded. Walter Winchell was stretched out handsomely on a wheel lounge pretending to sleep through the clatter of the cameras focused down on him by admiring youths. A friend of Ham's (Clem King or Ken Kling, I never can remember that mouthful of name) came forward and with a wicked twinkle in his gay eye said, shaking hands—"Welcome to the ghettol!" This irked Ham, but to me it seemed funny—when I looked around. I suddenly saw Hildegard and said to Ham, "I'm going over to say hello to Hildegard—wonder if she saved the caricature I made of her when she sang at the Lotos Club for us!" Then I grinned and said, "Hello, Hildegard!"

She looked at me kindly.

"I know who you are perfectly well," she said, "don't tell me . . . why, sure—Mr. McFadden!"

If it was a gag she did it well, but I had a nasty suspicion I looked near enough like the Bunion Derby King to be mistaken for him by a foreigner from Milwaukee. I went back and told Ham about it. He was furious and said, "I'll fix her!" I said, "Do you know her?" "No, but that doesn't matter!" He walked over to Hildegard smiling and said,

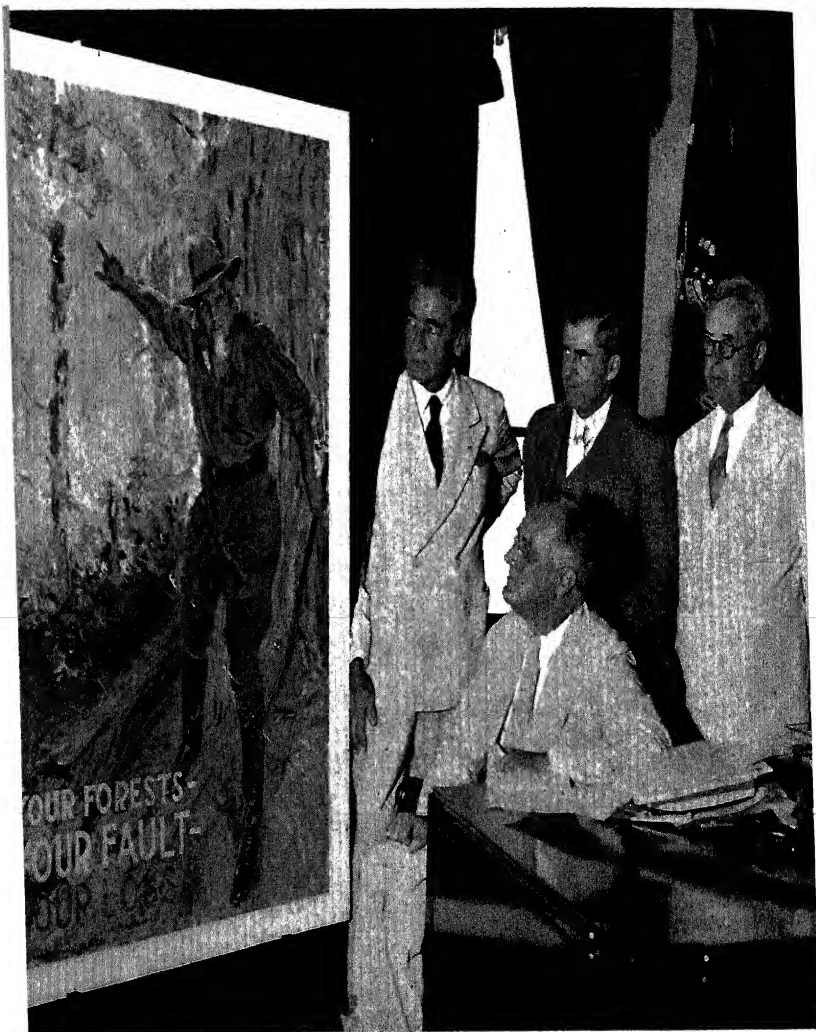
"Why, *hullo*, Sheila Barrett!"

Hildegard didn't care for that a little bit. Ham, the Dependable.

Later in town I was having my hair trimmed and I saw in the mirror a figure darting into the shop. The door was open and I was in the first chair. The figure, a cute feminine figure, patted me on my aproned shoulder and said through her teeth "Mr. McFadden!" and was out of the shop in a swirl. I recognized her as I turned and yelled "Hildegard—you . . ." She *is* cute! But after all—why couldn't she have mistaken me for Walter Pidgeon, or President Roosevelt or somebody attractive. I think I'll make a caricature of her some day.



A twenty-minute sketch of F.D.R.



F.D.R. accepts Flagg's poster for forest conservation at the White House

I have forgotten how I became acquainted with a fat person with a loud empty laugh, a publicity counselor type, a sweep-you-off-your-feet-with-his-commotion type, a man who never listens but just talks gustily all the time and because it might burst his blown-up ego I refrain from mentioning his name. But this sweet-scented go-getter horned in on my life for a spell with schemes—ostensibly for my benefit but really to further his own ends. And he had enough talent and imagination to impress people. His connection with me helped him quite a bit in Washington. He wasn't all pink marshmallow, for he did have brains. His gall and his vanity carried him along. I had to sit on him occasionally when his sense of humor, born of an inferiority complex, led him to introduce me to his friends as his handy man around the paintbox sort of thing. I am amazed at my own complaisance in suffering him as long as I did. It was through his connections in Washington that I met Mr. Roosevelt, although Fatso wasn't himself of enough importance to be present. And he did suggest the poster that I made and was paid for by the Government; or at least a printer in the Government's employ.

On the occasion of my first meeting with the beloved President I presented a large poster to him in his office at the White House. My heart went out to him at once: for his spirit was irresistible.

After the photos were taken, with Henry Wallace standing in, I asked the President if he'd sit for me for a quick sketch and he said,

"Of course I'd like you to do it!"

F.D.R. wanted to know if the light was all right and if I minded some people talking to him while I worked. He let the two or three men come in and sit opposite him and they did all the talking. I sat at the side. Senator Reynolds gabbed about some Negro question. The President sat looking at Reynolds and once he turned with a grin toward me and said, nodding his magnificent head toward the Senator:

"Spinach!"

I had to laugh with him. That was so cheerfully contemptuous, right in the man's face. When we were alone I showed my sketch to him and asked if he liked it. "It has a flair!" said Mr. Roosevelt, "I don't know what a flair is...but it *has* a flair!"

My second meeting with F.D.R. happened at a later date. I had painted a poster for the Infantile Paralysis drive. It was a life-size portrait of the President smiling. The committee in New York liked it, so they evidently told Mr. Roosevelt about it. I was dining with I. J. Fox and his family one evening and toward the end of the dinner a servant came in and told me the White House was on the wire. A friend of the President was on the phone—I wish I could remember his name—and he said they had been having a devil of a time locating me. He had a drawing room on the Washington train and he wanted me to grab the big canvas poster and meet him at the Penn Station. The President, he said, had asked me to do this. I told him the painting had been left at the apartment of my agent, Marjorie Norton, in Tudor City and that I would at once try to get it. Joe Fox, a veteran of the World War I, when I explained why I had to leave, got a checkbook and wrote out a check for \$500 to the President and enclosed it with a note asking me to give it to him, which I later did. I called Marjorie from my studio. No answer. I packed a small bag and called again. Still no answer. I was pretty anxious by now and telephoned the superintendent of the Tudor City, who demurred at going into Marjorie's apartment. I explained the urgency of the case and he was about to give in when along came Marjorie. I told her I would be right over for the painting in a hurry as there wasn't much time to catch the train. I met the President's friend at the station and we stowed the 50 x 60 canvas in our drawing room and tried to snatch a bit of sleep.

Then a wash-up and breakfast at a Washington hotel and over to the White House, where, after a little delay, I was

ushered upstairs by a secret service agent who said to me in a low tone,

"The President thought you hadn't arrived—he called out, 'Where is Monty Flagg?'"

I waited a few minutes in a large room full of naval pictures and mementos, then was ushered in to the President and we chatted about art, which he knew a lot about and agreed with me about the foulness of this modern stuff. Then we had our pictures taken with my poster.

I never saw the President again, although I did correspond with him. One line in a letter of his gave me a glow.

"I don't care what my enemies call me when I have a friend like you!"

F.D.R. was loved by the many and hated by the few—a sign of greatness. Indifference is the sign of mediocrity. But over the archway leading to Politics an invisible obijuration reads: "Abandon Forthrightness, All Ye Who Enter Here!"

I once wrote F.D.R. that I didn't agree with some of his policies, and that I didn't believe he did either. He answered he didn't expect me or anyone else to agree with all his policies—that he hated rubber stamps and that "unity in essential things is all that is required even in times like these!"

I had a withering contempt for the men and women who grew hysterical in their hatred for this very great American, like the stockbrokers who snarled and slavered because Mr. Roosevelt put a much needed curb on piracy in Wall Street. When I heard that Roosevelt was dead, I wept—with millions of others throughout the world—at the passing of one of our noblest Americans.

I had an interesting few days in Washington when I went down to write and draw impressions of some of the top men in government for the Associated Press. In those days people were sleeping in Baltimore, the nearest bedroom to Washington, but my friend Colonel Schiffler, the Smiling Swiss, saw to it that I got a room. In fact he fixed me up with the Lily Pons Suite in his Hotel Raleigh, and a beautiful basket of fruit

with his card on it. This courtesy reminded us of the way Ben Frank behaved at the Ambassador in Los Hollywood, when he managed that hotel.

A young A.P. correspondent who had just been ordered home from Vichy by his chief, Kent Cooper, on account of his dwindling health under the Vichy situation, was told off to be my guide and appointment maker. Washington was boiling with excitement, and it was lucky that I work fast or I doubt if I would have been tolerated—except for the obvious importance of the A.P. No matter how high up they were, the A.P. always got their man. I enjoyed and was interested by all my interviews—bar one! I had already done the President so I did some members of his cabinet and other notables: handsome, eagle-faced Cordell Hull with his very old voice; red-faced, dynamic Frank Knox looking as if he were about to explode into a shower of tomato juice; tall, homely-as-a-pine-knot General George C. Marshall. I didn't have a regular interview with Marshall—just sketched him as he was moving about, lecturing in a low room full of smoke, young men and women all terribly serious and intense as they listened to this master military mind. I was more impressed with Marshall than any of the other big shots. Harry Hopkins, lacking an elevator man at the moment, ran me up himself to his huge rooms in the White House. He was an interesting person, feverishly enthralled by modern life, sick-looking to the point of danger . . . pale-drawn, crooked mouth, intense burning dark eyes, and cynical man of the cities. He said about my drawing: "You've made me look worried!" I said: "Well, you are—aren't you?"

Then I went to a garden party at the Chinese Embassy where a great crowd of tall, charming young Chinese men and women wandered over the lawns. I didn't want to bother Dr. Hu Shih by asking him to pose, so I stood around with my pad and pencil and finally got a shot of him, with a cup of tea in his hand, saying goodbye to some guests. He asked if he could have a copy of my original sketch. I said, copy,

nothing—the sketch will be yours. I was so pleased that he liked the little thing.

I went out to the Australian Embassy, out in the woods like the British Embassy. I was actually treated like a guest by a lady and a gent. I told Mr. Casey he was the only gentlemen I had met—the only one of my interviewees who gave me a drink . . . two drinks. Although Casey was handsome and well-groomed he *didn't* look like the Adonis Anthony Eden, *in spite of his charming wife's denial that he did*. We had a good talk in an atmosphere like a lovely English house. The Scotch, unaccustomed as I was to it in Washington Government circles, limbered my tonsils enough to venture Al Dorne's priceless kangaroo story. Coals to Newcastle? Luckily for me they hadn't heard it. I've just had another couple of Scotches again, so here's the story.

A mother kangaroo was happily hopping in the sunshine, quietly humming to herself. Suddenly she slid to a stop, a dead stop, and a look of astonished anger distorted her face. She grabbed at her fur-lined pram, yanked out a baby kangaroo, spanked it hard, shoved it back in again, yanked out another brat, whacked its behind with equal force, shoved it back with its little brother and said:

"Now I guess that will teach you not to eat crackers in bed!"

The one unpleasant subject I drew was Lord Halifax. My A.P. friend met this titled boor in the hall as we were coming from Mr. Hull's office and introduced me, saying . . . "And of course you know who James Montgomery Flagg is. . . ." Halifax looked woodenly bored.

"Never heard of him," he said, looking right at me. The A.P. reporter overlooked that and continued with, "We want Mr. Flagg to make a sketch of you if you'll give him an appointment."

"Haven't time for that sort of thing."

A.P. persisted. "Mr. Flagg works very quickly; he probably won't take more than fifteen minutes."

"We-ell, I'll give him just fifteen minutes, no more," said his lordship. Then, looking at me, he added, "You fellows work

pretty quickly I know." He turned and stopped. "Tomorrow at twelve at the Embassy."

I had said nothing. I was thinking to myself... "I'll get back at you, you insolent so-and-so!"

The British Embassy is a beautiful building in the woods: quiet in the sunshine... some workmen making repairs... a couple of painters on ladders touching up the big Lion and Unicorn over the front door. There were no bells to ring that I could perceive, and I had quite a time finding anybody; I wandered around through great halls, crossed inner driveways, peered up great wide stairways, and thought, "Maybe everybody got sick looking at the ugly puss of the noble ambassador and left."

At last a butler happened by and I was shown into an ante-room. A couple of pleasant johnnies from the Air Ministry drifted in and we had a chat. Halifax kept me waiting an hour. Then some homely English girl took me into The Presence. He asked me where I'd like to sit. "I'll sit here," I said, "and you sit at your desk." I drew for ten minutes, while he looked over papers. He rose and left the room and came back in five minutes.

"You're almost finished I suppose?" he asked.

"You gave me fifteen minutes," I replied. "I've taken ten... the five minutes you were out of the room we don't count."

He sat down and I continued drawing, for five more minutes and he got up and looked at the sketch, saying,

"You've made me look rather young."

I looked at him and mused out loud:

"I see you as rather young. I see you... as a prep school boy... and *not* very popular!"

This is the actual conversation verbatim. When people have asked me, "What did he answer?" I explain that I purposely said something to him to which there could be no answer.

I wasn't through yet. I sent in my drawing and my remarks about Halifax. The Washington papers next morning, on an inside sheet, had in big black headlines across the page,

"*HALIFAX NEVER HEARD OF FLAGG.*" The newspaper lads didn't cotton to Halifax either, may I mention in passing.

In my story I had told about his rudeness, and that he said he'd never heard of me, and that I had never heard of him till I read in the newspapers *that he was a constant visitor to Cliveden*. The most important diplomatic post England had to fill is the Ambassador to Washington. And they sent Halifax.

I understand that a Sassanach is a Scotsman who gets tired of rain and oatmeal and lives anywhere but in Scotland. My old friend Freddie Warlock, the tall, dark and handsome actor, is one of them. He escaped with his life in World War I, came over here, dropped the "Major" and trod the boards with distinction. He also admitted that Elsie Ferguson was his second and current wife. Miss Ferguson was then past her height as a world-famous beauty and distinguished actress.

As an aside on Elsie, little Jimmy Forbes, the playwright, told me of an early incident when he was directing a play that Elsie's manager wanted her to be in. She was sent around to Jimmy, so he told me, and he explained to the beautiful one that she would have to go through a course of sprouts before he'd let her go on. She seemingly took his admonitions like a lamb and was becomingly humble. Afterwards Jimmy said he heard from her manager that she rushed into his office in a rage and said:

"Who is that little son of a bitch who tells me I walk like a drunken sailor and makes me walk around and around the room balancing the *Anatomy of Melancholy* on my head?"

But to get back to Freddie Warlock. Freddie had told me that Herbert Marshall (Bart to his friends) was in his command in the war. Out in Hollywood one time I was asked to go on the Lux hour on the air with Cecil De Mille. Merle Oberon and Bart Marshall were doing a playlet, and I asked Marshall if he knew Freddie.

"I saw him being blown up!" Marshall said.

After the program, although we sneaked out the back way,

the horde of autografters were waiting. After I had signed a number of the usual autograph books, some ticket stubs and a couple of milk bottle tops, an old lady edged up and said confidentially in my ear,

"Tell me, Mr. Flagg, aren't you really the originator of the Gibson Girl?" I gagged and looked to see if she were serious—she sure was. I solemnly told her,

"No, Ma'am, thank you for the compliment, but it was Howard Chandler Christy!" She retired happily with her new-found misinformation.

Some fairly lasting friendships start off the hard way. Al Dorne commenced his warm tolerance of me by hating my guts! Al is a ferocious-looking man, five-ten by five-ten, Man Hill if not Man Mountain. He looks like the Spirit of Westbrook Pegler, only more kindly, like a pirate of the Spanish Main. He is black and hairy like a prosperous tarantula. He has so many underlid eyelashes, his eyes look upside down. He was the handball champ of the eastern states and I have seen him having his way with clay pigeons. He slaughters them from any angle: standing, sitting, upside-down, looking cross-eyed from between his legs.

Up at Al's place in the country near Peekskill I went out with him and his Svenska butler, ex-champ marksman of Garboland, and watched them destroy scores of those clay pigeons. By the end of the performance he and his dead-shot servitor had rid the entire countryside of those pests. I had shot many clay pigeons over Fiesole at my friend Arthur Acton's villa in Florence, but they must have been tamer birds. I couldn't bag any at Al Dorne's. Was my face magenta!

Despite the rather menacing, black-a-vised aspect of this friend of mine he is even tougher than he looks. He has wrested 63 per cent of all advertising work from the field of Pictorial Lying, thus leaving that percentage of his fellow craftsmen flat on their bombosities. This he has done through his diabolical talent for drawing and being nice to a socially improbable band of complacent art directors. Al is a charter

member of the B.U.B.B.S.—Born under the Brooklyn Bridge Society. Ben Bernie and Eddie Cantor also were founders; so Ben Bernie (the old maestro) told me in a smoking car going to Washington.

Ben's was a fascinating Horatio Alger tale; how he was chosen to steal ice in the summer and coal in the winter; and about his thirteenth birthday when he had to put on his dad's clothes—the cuffs came down a foot below his fingers; and how he kept slipping out of sight into his father's collar ending finally with the ritual of saying, "Now I am a man!" How Bernie loved his mother, who would simply not believe Ben really had one of the great name bands in the country and was horrified at the expense of two nurses when she was sick. His account was so fascinating to a Catholic priest, who was listening from across the aisle, he came over and asked to meet Ben. Once in while you look into the eyes of a man and the undeniable truth is revealed... this is a *good* man! This is a beautiful experience. Ben ("Yowzer") Bernie was that kind of man.

Al Dorne is a good man too, but by Godfrey he doesn't *look* it! If you suddenly met him in an alley full of barrels on a dock at three A.M., and a ray of light flashed on his face three feet away, you would say to yourself, "This is it!" and faint.

This artist in ogre's clothing can draw anything; with or without models and photos. And I *do* mean draw. This warm-hearted, gifted guy fascinates me because of his discrepancies and contradictions. Of course it would be a bit too unbelievable if his strokes had the lacelike delicacy of that other fine artist, Harry Beckhoff, who they say drew the San Francisco Peace Conference on the head of a pin; in penanink with added color.

Al is a wonderful raconteur, and specializes in zoology. Those sagas of his about his membership in the B.U.B.B.S. may well be hooey, as may also be the tales he tells of his early life as a newsboy. Why, he even claims to have sold me morning papers as I staggered out of Rector's. This is slightly ex-

aggerated, as I not only never staggered out of Rector's, I never went in there. He will no doubt put in a number of these fairy tales when *Who's Who* gets around to him.

One of Bluebeard Dorne's many wives presented an unbelievable daughter to him—Elaine. She is hauntingly, shockingly beautiful! Her name should have been Salomé. In fact once at the Stork I was dining with the Dornes and Elaine said she couldn't make up her mind what to have for dinner. So I suggested that the most fitting dish would be John the Baptist's head on a platter.

People sometimes said to me after meeting my first wife: "Now that we have met Nellie, you have risen in our opinion!"

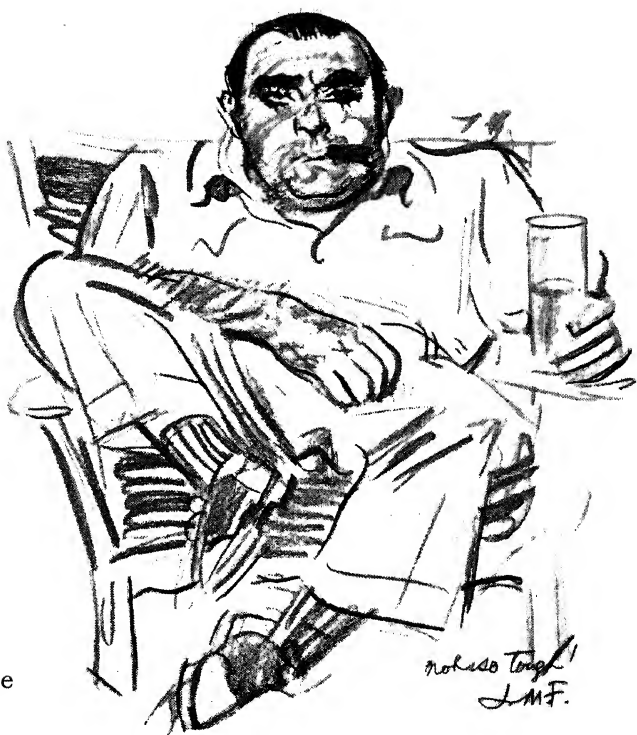
This might be said equally well to Al after meeting his wife Edna. She is a lovely, dainty sprite of a gal and much subtler than Al, or so I like to think because of her quick appreciation of my quips. Edna is in sharp and charming contrast to the brawny Al. When I look from one to the other in happy incredulity I am sure he wooed her with a butterfly net.

Recently I happened to read a review of a collection of Scott Fitzgerald's last stories, which recalls to me an incident in Hollywood years ago when I spent an evening and its attached morning with Scott and his wife. Brownie, Reg Simpson and I met the Fitzgeralds at a party where this brilliant young drunk had collected all the vanity cases of the women assembled and was stewing them in tomato ketchup on the kitchen range. This, to me, was straining pretty hard to be crazy and amusing.

Later several of us—except Brownie, who had gone to bed because it was bedtime—were sitting on the coping in the parking patio of the Ambassador listening to Mrs. Fitzgerald as she paced up and down singing interminable verses of a ballad about a *maison de joie*. Scott had persuaded the night starter to cash a check for several hundred dollars, giving him fifty for his trouble; and he hired a big car and off we went through the hills in quest of John Monk Saunders—why,



"Bugs" Baer



Albert Dorne

not so tough!
L.M.F.



John Golden and the author
at Palm Beach

Portrait of William Gaxton
painted for The Lambs
when he was Shepherd
(Photo by H. R. E. Phyfe)



I don't know. At last we stopped at the foot of a tall hill and Reg and I decided to let the Fitzgeralds get out and climb up to see if it really happened to be the right place. It being then about four o'clock A.M. we thought we'd prefer having the pants bitten off the Fitzgeralds by a possible bulldog. They found Saunders in and called down to us. It was okay and we climbed up through the Jap garden to the house where Saunders was in his pajamas and a Sulka dressing robe and sandals; smiling imperturbably and getting drinks as if nothing surprised him. He turned on his phonograph and we sat about chatting, with the exception of Mrs. F., who in prowling around found a pair of editor's shears and then sat down next to Saunders on a lounge, pulled open his robe and took a deep inhalation, then called:

"Scott, come here. John smells lovely!"

Scott went over and sat on the other side of Saunders and they buried their noses in his manly chest. They sighed luxuriously. Nothing fazed Saunders. Then Mrs. F. remembered the shears and began gently urging her host to let her perform a quick operation on him, explaining with quiet eloquence that his earthly troubles would be over if he would submit. He firmly but politely declined.

On the drive back Scott would turn to squint at me as I sat in the back seat under the murky overhead light and say disgustedly:

"God! But you look old!"

If I had ever seen them again it would have been much too soon.

Mrs. F. boasted to me that she had written articles and sold them for \$600 to magazines, signing them with Scott's name. When they left for Hollywood, I was told they stacked all the furniture in their room in the center of the floor and put their unpaid bills on top and, when they got aboard their train, crawled in on their hands and knees all the way to their compartment. These charming young people.

14. FRIENDS ARE FUNNY

ABOUT FORTY years ago I compiled a little book of verses and pictures which had appeared in *Life*—in the original *Life*. It was called *Why They Married* and I included a number of couples who were my friends, both in caricature and humorous verse. Married couples are still a source of innocuous merriment to me. I am the audience and they are the show, unconsciously. I like to watch the way they treat each other; their conception of marriage, their attitudes, their conformings and their nonconformings to the pattern.

Allowing for the usual exceptions, I have noticed that the general attitude of American husbands is of mildly affectionate contempt for their wives. This is often accompanied by automatic criticism of everything they do, say, cook and think; not to mention their looks and raiment of course. Yet husbands will indignantly and self-righteously deny the truth of these facts. In their own estimation they are, as husbands, just loving with passionate tenderness, naturally regular and always right. The wives let them dream. The average husband *thinks* he is “the head of the house.”

In my gallery of women, where beauty is hung on the line, there are one or two who are not strictly beautiful; only pretty. I couldn't give them wall space for less than that. I have never had any slight interest in homely ladies—no matter how charm-

ing and intelligent they are reputed to be. They do not exist for me.

Peggy Strickland, now Mrs. Parks, is in my gallery, although she isn't beautiful. She's pretty, she's witty and she's intelligent, and we are great friends. Long before she got tired of girls as living mates and married Paul to see if that would be any better, I used to see a lot of her. She always had pads, pencils and rubbers and loved to watch me draw ridiculous things, by the hour, and she'd keep all these foolish sketches in scrap-books—extraordinary girl! We often sat in her apartment way over on the East Side until the crack of dawn, having drinks with me drawing; and when the milkman seemed to suggest that I ought to go home, Peggy would take her dog and we'd go out and get a taxi... and *she* would drive me home. Of course I was old enough to be her father. That had a bearing on this curious procedure. But, considering that I wasn't exactly doddering, it was largely a matter of Peggy's lovely, zany sense of fun. She and Paul put on some delightful song-fests nowadays; she with her lovely, well-trained soprano and Paul with his splendid baritone. Peggy loves crowds, gangs, mobs of people. If I didn't know she was born in South Africa I would have guessed it was the Penn Station.

Another portrait on the line is Georgia McDonald. Georgia happens to be extremely beautiful. There are so many beautiful women in America these days! More per capita than ever was. I'm sorry she was born in Texas; the Texans always seem to shriek and howl rather crudely about how important it is to be a Texan.

Georgia is one of the few women who needn't wear jewelry, but she likes to spoil it all with earrings and stuff. Otherwise she has *beaucoup de chic*. Her legs make Marlene Dietrich's look like cheese sticks. *And she also has a face*. Her sense of humor is, however, a trifle harsh. But she is so beautiful she can get away with it. I took her home one night, long before she married Gilbert Bundy, an artist, and as we got out of the taxi she put on a fake passionate whisper:

"Jimmy, I'll give you fifty cents if you'll take your clothes off right here on the stoop!" Something about the picture it created in my mind made me strangle with laughter: me with all my clothes off around my feet looking like a Bartlett pear on two asparagus stalks and she, a good sport, urging the half-dollar on me anyhow. Ah, women! Silly creatures at best; wives at worst.

Gene Buck is famous for his Abou Ben Adam feeling about his fellow man and his postprandial obsequies. The difference between Gene Buck and Frank Buck is that Frank brings 'em back alive! How Pearl treats 'em I haven't the faintest.

But these vignettes would not be complete without telling a bit about one of my most intimate friends, possibly of a dozen years standing, who is just half my age, though this doesn't seem to have any bearing on the matter. He's a young artist in New Haven; small town, except for his interest in cultural matters. I'm more or less of a hero to him which makes it agreeable to me at the start. He has had other heroes, like Art Young and Max Beerbohm. His name is Willis Birchman, and he is quite unknown except locally in New Haven. He did caricatures in the *Register*, and wrote trenchant paragraphs about his victims, and was grossly underpaid because the New Haven editors must be dull and small-town or they would know they had a real caricaturist in their midst. And Birchman can write too. He doesn't sleep in a bed, he sleeps between the leaves of a book. He is far from stuffy because of that. On the contrary, when he calls a spade the proverbial bloody old shovel, his proofreaders change it back to spade. Ah, New England. I know. My people came from there. Willis has had an unhappy married life, gathered into the voracious maw of Hymen at a pitifully early age; and at last it looks as if he were escaping, though probably into the same hole he came out of.

Birchman and I have kept up a correspondence through the years, always with a pictorial comment from one to the other. More perhaps from me than from him because I had more time

to squander. He has had at least five hundred cartoons in water-color from me. We are completely frank with each other, with the certain knowledge of each other's sympathy and understanding; which adds up, in my opinion, to a remarkable friendship. Or maybe *I'm* frank.

One of my favorite people is Paul Hollister, although he was from Grand Rapids and went to Havvad.

I don't have to cross his t's and he doesn't dot my i's we are simpatico in spite of the advantage I have of him because I am not a Havvad Man. Mostly out of kindness, I seldom refer to it.

Julian Street and I first met this engaging albino youth when we dropped into Cambridge one time. I have forgotten why. I called Paul "the chicken" on account of his startling blondness. He stood out from his fellow students like Walter Lippmann would in Congress. He was mature and wise. His classmates had to recognize this whether they liked him or not. I have heard, these many years later, he is rather forbidding to most people and will say good morning to no one. Like "Mr. Hoggenheimer" in a comedy by that name several decades ago! "I am Mr. Hoggenheimer—I am rich—I don't have to say good morning to anybody!"

At college Paul was, of course, on the Havvad *Lampoon*, and about that time the editors made several outsiders Honorary Editors of that famous humorous magazine: starting with John Ames Mitchell, the editor of *Life* who was one of the founders; Oliver Herford; Wallace Irwin, Lars Andersen and me. I enjoyed going to many of those "Lampy" dinners, and once I made up as G. Bernard Shaw and did a burlesque lecture through my beard. Some years later I was invited to the annual banquet and I asked if I could bring my friend Dean Cornwell, for it is a stupid train ride alone. Dean came with the proviso that he wouldn't be called on to talk. That was easily arranged, as they didn't know he could talk. But—they *did* call on Dean anyway and I felt a bit sorry for him. Corn-

well got up and to my outraged astonishment made the best talk of the evening; which I had fatuously intended to do myself. I had been nursing an adder! Old Adder Cornwell!

I seem to have more trouble with friends than with enemies. It's sort of like the old exterminator sign in Columbus Circle—a little boy saying, "Be's you got bugs? Sure I are! Everybody do!"

I liked Billy Woodward's brilliant satiric novels—*Bread and Circuses* was one. He was a reformed banker from the South who got a swelled head over his success in his middle age when *Harper's* started to publish his books. He made some folding money and said, "Monty, I'm tired of the American Scene," an interesting phrase, and took passage to Europe for a holiday. He asked me to see him off. I met him in his cabin where he and his equally brilliant wife dispensed champagne—Harpers' Sec. He said in a smooth, *almost* patronizing murmur:

"Come, Monty, come and be photographed with me for the Press on the Upper Deck?"

When the shot appeared in the rotogravure section of those days the caption read: "James Montgomery Flagg sees a friend off to Europe."

I used to have small Yuletide eggnog parties in my dump of a studio over Milch's Galleries. Once Billy Woodward roared in a bit late and with no malice whatever pushed my little three-year-old daughter over onto the floor. Why she was there I do not know. Before he had gotten around the screen near the front door, he began to tell of his enormous success at a party in Greenwich Village. I never saw him again. At my request.

Also at this little party were my friends Olin Howland, the dancing comedian, and Paul Hollister—I don't know what he was then if anything. Anyhow he, Paul, was vastly amusing and he and Olin went into a routine of tap and eccentric dancing interrupted by Paul's sudden imitation of Walter Damrosch conducting his *Children's Hour*—one of the funniest things I have ever heard. Then back Paul and Olin went to their mad

dance in the course of which Paul knocked over my enormous bowl of eggnog. I had made this Olympian nectar with much eggs, much heavy cream, much sugar, and even more than much Bacardi rum. I had taken time—and ingredients. It was marvelous, with a dusting of nutmeg. My eggnog is, in fact, remembered by appreciative people of both sexes. There it was on the dirty floor of my studio; punctuated with broken glass. Then to make it a complete mess three penaninks I had just finished for the Cosmo were splashed with enough nog to make French toast out of them!

After that, I didn't see Paul for *years*! In fact not until I heard that he had become Vice-President (he is always Vice-President of some bulbous corporation) of Macy's. Then I decided to speak to him again, because I sensed that he was so ashamed of his breaking my bowl of nectar that he would always try to make it up to me. Paul has done so generously and whenever he could turn a job my way. I don't want him to realize it but I am now tremendously in his debt. And if he realizes that, he'll never give me another job.

Paul has at last, after shopping around, taken a wife who is just the woman for him. A miracle. She is not only seductive physically (and I am Radar to that sort of thing) but she's perturbingly smart and feels that she's just as damned important as Paul. Sounds ominous. But she really is a honey, though a little insistent on the Park Avenue routine. Paul couldn't come to dinner in his suspenders even if they were the red ones Sherman Billingsley gives to his friends.

One more thing about the Hollisters. They have covers on their china ash trays. A refinement. Makes you wander about with your butt. I suggested to Carol that she knit some old-fashioned "hushers" to put over the covers. Thus refining a refinement.

My beautiful daughter Faith is 5 ft. 11½ inches in her socks, has a baby, my grinchild I call her. She smiles at me. And never was such an adorable baby born into this rotten world. But . . . when she grows up she will steam open letters.

POSTLUDE

I THOUGHT OF doing a prelude to this stuff of mine but I realize it is more logically an afterthought. Although in another sense there should, I suppose, be an apology for an autobiography, apologies for my ancestors, my previous lives, for their combined responsibility in shaping a person who would choose to write an autobiography. It is the final shameful and shameless act of an egotist. An egotist will automatically snatch at alibis for any deeds which he has a sneaking suspicion are open to the world's sneers.

I was branded by a literary man, or at any rate a publisher, as an episodomite. While I won't actually go to the mat with him on that, if it will be admitted that there can be such a thing as an autobiography, it should be recognized as the more or less honest telling of the story of a life . . . by the one who lived it. Now I ask . . . aren't all lives episodic? In order to give it a semblance of reality, what is wrong artistically with a series of episodes and flashbacks with, of course, a definite going forward, as a life story of a human? Provided it is readable—for readableness is to my mind the *sine qua non* in a book. True or false? In other words must Episodomy be a crime?

In one way it's a handicap writing an autobiography. You can't say the flattering things a biographer would say. All you can do is to try.

In the terrible gold and sable tapestry of the universe even the greatest humans shrink to weavers of a few leaves in the border. My god! That's sonorous crap—I get a laugh out of pretending I am at times profound! It's my fun and it doesn't fool anyone worth fooling, not even me. I'm really a frivolous person. Without laughter life would not be bearable to me. If I were sent by the cerulean brass hats to heaven and I found no laughter, I would get to hell out of there if I could.

And why all this raised-eyebrow at sentiment? Why is it sneerworthy? Maudlinity, yes; that is sick-making, and sentimentality is not much better. But sentiment...there are people who deride that. I can't see why. I guess they are Prohibitionists. They would crawl out from under a sweating stone, see a beautiful wood violet just sitting and being beautiful, sneer and crawl back home. (I have an aunt like that.) Sentiment is just beauty registering in your veins—an anodyne to the ugliness of life. One of the purest unexpected seconds I have had is the smile of a passing baby in a pram, holding out a wilting flower in its grubby little fists, smiling at me; even turning and continuing to smile...just for me! This extraordinary smile happens so often, I say to myself...I can't be as lousy as my friends insist! Now that is rank sentiment, so what? Should I be ashamed?...Why? I love it; it makes me happy, if only for a moment. I think that is a lovely thing to happen to anybody.

Then there is the sweet-sadness that certain songs evoke. Not about any particular person, just the sadness of the idea. Yes, I am a rank sentimentalist. All artists are. Not modernists—they are not artists.

It's silly to speak of "*modern art*." There's no such thing. Art is good or bad, time has nothing to do with it.

Beauty is beauty, always; and art is art in so far as it creates or interprets beauty. It takes an extraordinary type of cretin not to respond to a beautiful thing. The response is great or little according to the sensitiveness of the person; and the

contrary is also true—the degree of revulsion or disgust at ugliness is measured by one's sensitivity.

Of course there is no more irritating man in the world than he who says in effect, What I don't know ain't so! You have all met him and wanted to hit him over the head. Well, if I have irritated you I hope I have at least done so with a heavy chair in a little different way.

I have read a book by John Hemming Fry—*The Revolt Against Beauty*, a passionate and intellectual rebellion against taking art fakers at their own value. He is a bit repetitious in his warlike enthusiasm, but he makes a devastating arraignment of the masked maggots of art.

He names the Marquis de Sade the patron devil of it all. I take issue with him on only one account; he puts Monet in the lists with Manet, Cezanne, Van Gogh, and the rest of the charlatans. All you need do is to see the magnificent collection of Monets in the Chicago Art Museum to perceive Fry's mistake. I think there never was a greater landscapist than Monet. He's the Rodin of painting. Otherwise Fry blasts hell out of that mangy crew of canvas ruiners, and spansk Thomas Craven and the other—as we laughingly say—critics.

The most amazing aspect of the whole modern movement (sic!) to me, is the fact that such brazen and obvious nonsense could have been foisted on any public... even the United Sheep of America. My weariest disgust is not that the moron is the sucker, but that otherwise intelligent and intellectual and charming and sophisticated people, solemnly and superciliously, line up as super-suckers in this gallery. Some buy it. And some even sell it, which is a good deal more comprehensible, ain't it, Crownpy?

As this cavalcade of death shuffles through the halls of our museums under the ever shifting aliases of their supposed schools of supposed art, they seem to say: "Well, they've swallowed *this* unholy mess, now we'll try this one on them. It's still more impudently ugly—let's call it 'sur-realism'; it doesn't

mean a thing but it sounds important. . . . The next act, ladies and gents, will be 'post-sur-realism.'

So then these artists pin a pair of red flannel drawers, a kippered herring, a broken alarm clock, a sponge full of vermifuge, a broken skull and a staring eyeball onto a canvas. Then you have twelve guesses.

At the Art Student's League when I was a lad some of the students contrived just such monstrosities each year in a crude burlesque of the Spring Academy. But they didn't call it art! They called them fakes. This was the origin of the Fakers Ball. Nor did they attempt to explain the fakes by saying this is supposed to represent the way the vice-president of the Acme Laundry would feel if he had any feelings . . .

The art of painting is really very simple. I mean painting. First you have a hell of a lot of talent. I mean talent; then you have a lot of experience; then you have a lot of knowledge; then you have a lot of taste; then you have understanding, intuition, imagination, craftsmanship, red blood, philosophy, a fine canvas, the best paints, and some one or something that demands your entire concentration. The result is a fine canvas.

You are not bewildered or befuddled when you contemplate it. You don't snicker, or look anxiously about or try to find someone to explain it to you. It's there—a part of human experience. You study it with pleasure, and afterwards you remember it as you would a lovely haunting melody. Did you ever see one of these "modern" things that gave you any such joy? You know damn well you didn't!

Another point: These mud-in-art boys never use beautiful color. Their reds are dried snake blood; their blues poisonous prussian, their yellows are bile, and even their whites are shark belly. The kindest thing I can say about them is that they are obscene.

I was sardonically amused at the unprecedented mobs that crowded the Van Gogh show at the so-called Museum of so-called Modern Art. That was a case of publicity triumphant. A

principal reason for the show's success was contemporaneous publication of Van Gogh's biography, *Lust for Life*, a best-seller. That word "lust" was a publishing inspiration.

Of course we are all quite aware of the other extreme in art—the mid-Victorian. The pretty in art. It was pretty terrible. But I think that a baby blue rosette was preferable to a bu-bonic rat!

When it is necessary to have a guide, blueprints, pseudo-metaphysics, and polysyllabic words to explain these canvases, it isn't art. It's putrid puzzles. You don't need a guide to explain Sargent's portrait of "Marquand," Whistler's "Mother," Rembrandt's "Night Watch," Velasquez' "Virgin," Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa"; and, paralleling, you need no interpreter as you listen to Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," Schumann's "Concerto," Schubert's "Serenade," Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," and Wagner's "Pilgrim Chorus." But what do you need beginning with Manet's "Olympia" through "The Nude Descending the Staircase" (which probably started the First World War!) to the present-day Portrait of a Vacuum Cleaner having its Tonsils removed or Salad Bowl full of Left Ears? I feel that you need the Yale Bowl to be sick in!

One of the heroes of the modern intelligentsia is Renoir, whose banalities were apparently painted with pillow feathers and lipstick. There is nothing worse even in the Royal Academy in London, which after about two centuries of persistent efforts is still tops in self-conscious dullness.

Mr. Rockefeller, a businessman though he may be, is an art lover. At least he performed a service for art in America when he had Rivera's clumsy and ugly murals cleaned off the walls of Radio City.

The people who give wall space to these ugly modernistic things are either insincere or decadent. I know many artists and out of the lot only two are decadent . . . and even they have to draw or paint decently to be able to live. Which in itself is a ray of sunshine in a chaotic world. As Beau Nash said long

ago in Bath, "Nothing matters, but everything is of the utmost importance!"

What do these people know about the abstract that we don't know? They don't know any more about the world beyond the senses than we do. Of course there are other worlds. I have been interested in occultism all my life. I have delved into metaphysics and mysticism... *but*... as Thoreau said: "One world at a time!" At that I am implying a transcendentalism to these charlatans that is much too flattering, I'm afraid.

These people are not playing fair with the ordinary commuter when they say, "Look, a camera can make realistic pictures, even a low illustrator can do almost as well." Whom do they fool?

No artists can see eye to eye with each other, but there are certain fundamentals we all recognize.

I don't think we want an algebraical puzzle in painting. I would leave that to the scientists. I want an assuagement of the thirst for beauty; something that gives me a feeling of well-being... not something that has to be explained with blueprints and a lecture.

It comes down to... what do you want from art? What do you want from music? Does a baby have to have its mother's milk explained? And if you think we aren't babies you're kidding yourselves!

John Sloan said art ought to be prohibited. He said something, a bit too subtle for average powers of comprehension, but at any rate artists know what he meant. (I wonder if he did!)

I find that the strangest and most uncomfortable critter in the world is the one who is naturally honest. As a rule the world tries to squash, with pragmatic and worldly-wise apothegms, anyone who says what he thinks. Such as, "Exhibitionist!" "What good does it do to bring *that* up?" "One doesn't mention such things!" "You'll antagonize certain very large groups!" "It may be true, I hadn't thought of it that way, but you lay yourself, and us too, open to reprisals!" "Let's coast on

those ideas!" "You only make trouble!" "Soft pedal on that stuff, it's dynamite!" "You'll hurt their feelings!"

So we live in a world of Near-Freedoms, especially the Near-Freedom of Speech.

It's hard for me to believe I am an American—not what one thinks of as American today. I guess I'm an American of the Past. I will not belong to groups of people who insist on my wearing a button in my lapel reading, "Call me Jim!" I doubt that I was, like Pooh-Ba, *born* sneering. I think it was forced upon me as the American scene unrolled before mine eyes. But I know that being that curious human, an artist, I respond to the extremes of ugliness and beauty, as I see it, more violently and passionately than a respectable citizen would. Now consider the American businessman and the American artist—each considers himself superior to the other. It doesn't make sense possibly, but it's the truth! I'm sure the artist couldn't exist without the businessman. That's one of the things that gripes the artist! We knew we are jet-propelled at 800 m.p.h. while he rumbles along like a Greyhound bus. We look down upon him, but damme, we're grounded without him!

I have another theory which of course may be sophistry—that is that there is no future and no present, only the past.

The future doesn't exist, it never happens. Say for convenience the future, which isn't, flows into *now* . . . the present. How can you designate *now*? The moment or second you say "*now*" . . . it has gone past your lips! You can't hold it long enough to say it. What have you left? the *past*.

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